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John Milton and CS Lewis: Pagan myths, Christian men

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JOHN MILTON and C. S. LEWIS:

PAGAN MYTHS, CHRISTIAN MEN

A Thesis

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

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Abstract

In 1942, C. S. Lewis wrote two apparently unrelated books: A Preface to Paradise Lost and Perelandra. Although they are works of literary criticism and science fiction respectively, their differences in genre only thinly disguise what they have in common. This study explores how Lewis's fiction, especially Perelandra, adapts that with which Lewis agrees and alters that with which he disagrees in John Milton's Paradise Lost.

The introduction quotes T. S. Eliot's claim that truly great works "live on" in the works of succeeding authors. According to this view, the story of Eden (in Genesis) lives on in Milton's Paradise Lost, and Milton's work lives on in Lewis's Perelandra. Throughout this study, attention is occasionally drawn to examples (in the two works) which support Eliot's theory.

Although Milton and Lewis were Christians, both received educations rich in (Greek and Roman) pagan mythology. The next chapter of this study compares their attitudes toward pagan mythology. Both men considered pagan myths relevant to biblical stories and the Christian faith, and their views in this regard are examined.

The remaining five chapters, which study specific elements of Milton's and Lewis's treatments of the Garden of Eden story, include frequent mention of the authors' handling of determinism and free will. Both men (Lewis less obviously than Milton) employ their works "to justify the ways of God to men," and to this end their works emphasize mankind's free will in choosing to sin against a benevolent God.

Moving from mythology in general to the stories' settings in particular, the study's third chapter compares Milton's Paradise to Lewis's

loci amoeni (lovely places), especially his descriptions of Perelandra's assets. These two settings are also examined in light of the ancient pagan myth of the locus amoenus.

The fourth chapter compares Milton's Eve to her counterpart, the Lady in Lewis's Perelandra. Although their similarities are important, their differences are much more so, and the significance of these are explained.

Chapter five looks at Milton's Christ and Lewis's Ransom as Christian heroes. Adam (in Paradise Lost) and Perelandra's King are not important to this study and receive little attention.

The sixth and seventh chapters focus upon the villain: Milton's Satan and Lewis's Weston. In A Preface to Paradise Lost, Lewis attacked some critics' theory that Satan is Milton's hero. Although his attack defeats the theory, he thought the theory significant enough to attack it again (more subtly this time) in Perelandra. Chapter six of this study therefore shows how Weston is more clearly the villain of Lewis's Eden than Satan is of Milton's.

The seventh chapter examines how Lewis uses Weston to attack the twentieth century myths of scientism. By making Weston carry scientism to its logical extreme, he scares his readers into being more cautious of the abuse of science. Milton briefly warns against the pride of science; Lewis writes many essays and a science fiction trilogy to warn us about its possible abuses.

The conclusion of this study briefly offers what Lewis might write about the present state of pagan and Christian mythology were he still alive in 1990.

In memory of H'Kir (Koho tribe, Dalat, Vietnam, 1973), whose decision to be my friend cost him his life. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." (John 15:13)

For Beth, whose decision to be my friend saved and enriched my life. "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, for love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." (Song of Songs 8:6,7)

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ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS BY C. S. LEWIS

AoL = The Allegory of Love, 1936

AM = The Abolition of Man, 1943

BOX = Boxen: The Imaginary World of the Young C. S. Lewis, 1985

DI = The Discarded Image, 1964

DT = The Dark Tower and Other Stories, 1977

DY = Dymer, 1926

EC = An Experiment in Criticism, 1961

EL = English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama, 1954

EPCW = Essays Presented to Charles Williams, 1947

4L = The Four Loves, 1960

GD = The Great Divorce, 1945

GO = A Grief Observed, 1961

HB = The Horse and His Boy, 1954

LAG = The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves, 1979

LB = The Last Battle, 1956

LET = Letters of C. S. Lewis, 1966

LL = The Latin Letters of C. S. Lewis, 1987

LM = Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer, 1963

LC = Letters to Children, 1985

LWW = The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, 1950

MC = Mere Christianity, 1943

MIR = Miracles, 1947

MN = The Magician's Nephew, 1955

NP = Narrative Poems, 1969

OS = On Stories, 1966

OSP = Out of the Silent Planet, 1938

OW = Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories, 1966

PC = Present Concerns, 1986

PCAS = Prince Caspian, 1951

PER = Perelandra, 1943

POEM = Poems, 1964

PP = The Problem of Pain, 1940

PPL = A Preface to Paradise Lost, 1942

RE = Rehabilitations and Other Essays, 1939

RP = Reflections on the Psalms, 1958

SL = The Screwtape Letters, 1942

SC = The Silver Chair, 1953

SiB = Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics, 1919

SIL = Spenser's Images of Life, 1967

SiW = Studies in Words, 1960

SLE = Selected Literary Essays, 1969

SMRL = Studies in Medieval & Renaissance Literature, 1966

SbJ = Surprised by Joy, 1955

TAP = They Asked for a Paper: Papers & Addresses, 1962

THS = That Hideous Strength, 1946

TPR = The Pilgrim's Regress, 1933

TOA = Transposition and Other Addresses, 1949

VDT = The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader", 1952

WLN = The World's Last Night and Other Essays, 1960

WoG = The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses, 1949

XR = Christian Reflections, 1967

Preface

One day by chance many months ago, I took a break from studying Paradise Lost by beginning C. S. Lewis's Perelandra. Before finishing the latter, I had discovered some of its many similarities to the former. I began to think about writing this thesis.

Just before winding up weeks of research on "my" topic, I learned that Margaret Patterson Hannay had written several papers directly or indirectly treating the Milton-Lewis connection. I recalled how Crusoe felt terror, not relief, when he first saw signs of another human on "his" island. He feared cannibals. But a telephone call to Dr. Hannay taught me that I had nothing to fear. Although the thesis would not be completely original, I might find new connections, and I would surely not be roasted for repeating parts of her several studies.

As a boy, I climbed many "unscaled peaks," only to find cigarette butts and beer cans. As long as I believed the peaks unscaled, however, each climb thrilled me with danger and discovery. I may not have been the peak's first climber, but it was still my first time, and my illusion's joy outweighed the truth's disillusionment. I thank Dr. Hannay for encouraging me to climb and enjoy my "discoveries." And I believe she was right: I think I have added something to the existing studies of Milton's influence on Lewis.

Part of what delights me in studying Milton and Lewis is the brilliance with which they defend Christianity. I am a Christian, and, like a basketball player learning that he has a seven-foot teammate, I am encouraged to find such venerable fellow believers. This is, however, a mixed blessing, for it can color critical evaluation with partiality.

I should not vote a teammate Most Valuable Player merely because he is on my team; nor should the fact that I share their religious beliefs cloud my estimation of Milton or Lewis. I therefore try to remain as neutral as possible toward the writers' faith as it pertains to the criticism. If I have occasionally failed in this--if, in other words, my Christianity intrudes upon impartial scholarship--I apologize to those who do not share my beliefs.

On the other hand, to those who are Christians I offer a word of caution. Do not misunderstand what I write about "Christian myths" or "the Edenic myth." I do not mean to imply that the events recorded in Scripture are historically untrue. Like Lewis, I believe that an event can be historically true and be myth or have a mythical quality about it. Even if Abraham Lincoln actually grew up in a log cabin, something mythical-romantic or story-like remains: stew cooking in a cast-iron pot over a wood fire, strong but gentle men and women, feather beds in the loft, a flintlock musket in the corner. Historical or not, the emotive quality persists. Scholars disagree on whether Jonah is historical, but they agree on the lessons it teaches. Even if a real whale did swallow a real Jonah, they are both mythical characters.

Finally, I have learned as much about research, writing, revision, and the use of time as I have about Milton and Lewis. I began with the idea that I would approach, encompass, and tie up the subject before presenting it to my committee. I have approached the subject, but it has encompassed and tied me up. This thesis now seems a mere introduction to countless possibilities--as getting one's foot wet is to swimming the Channel. And now I want to swim.

1. Introduction

In a discussion of how people approach music and art with different priorities and motivations, C. S. Lewis observes that

> Tintoretto's Three Graces . . . may be the starting-point for a meditation on Greek myth which, in its own right, is of value. It might conceivably, in its own different way, lead to something as good as the picture itself. This may be what happened when Keats looked at a Grecian urn. If so, his use of the vase was admirable. But admirable in its own way; not admirable as an appreciation of ceramic art. (EC 18)

These words would also describe what happens when John Milton looks at the story of the Fall. We cannot, strictly speaking, call Paradise Lost a discussion of the theological truths in Genesis, but we must certainly call it "admirable in its own way." Like "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the epic contains a poet's response. The theologian's response appears in Milton's De Doctrina Christiana.

Although he certainly does not intend it to do so, what Lewis says writes about Keats' poem also applies to two of his own books. When he responds to his 1941 studies of Milton by writing A Preface to Paradise Lost and Perelandra in 1942, Lewis does both what Keats has done and what he has not. Like "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Perelandra is admirable literary art, but "admirable in its own way." In A Preface to Paradise Lost, on the other hand, Lewis does what Keats has not done: criticism. Had he never studied the epic, he obviously would not have written his Preface; but the same is also true ("in its own different way") of his writing Perelandra. In the former, a literary scholar responds to Mil-

ton's work; in the latter, a story-teller responds.

Keats responds to the urn as a poet, not as a ceramicist. Rather than describing its circumference, height, weight, color, or materials, he calls it a bride, a foster-child, an historian, and a tease. Keats gives it life and personality: that is his method. His purpose, as I see it, is to celebrate the graceful beauty of the vessel, to praise its maker, to draw readers into the picture-story adorning it, to point out beauty's timelessness, and to show the irony between the youthful action portrayed and the urn's ancient, silent existence.

When Milton writes Paradise Lost, he too adds life and personality to his subject. Over biblical accounts of the Fall he paints great embellishments: vivid descriptions, dramatic action, and unforgettable speeches. Like Keats, Milton draws us into a story's graceful beauty and praises its Maker. His methods--like Keats', but on a much grander scale--include the use of classical pagan mythology. And his purpose requires grander ambition, for he intends nothing less than "to justify the ways of God to men" (I.26). To do this, he emphasizes the free will of all God's creatures, so that readers blame them, not God, for the Fall. Milton combines pagan mythology, religious feelings, and didactic motives to produce art that profoundly shaped the Western world.

T. S. Eliot, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," describes this fusion. Great works of art result when feelings and "a consciousness of the past" (6) coalesce in a "finely perfected medium" (7) such as Milton:

> The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which

> remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together. (Eliot 8)

Few people have a "receptacle" so large or a "consciousness of the past" so great as Milton's, though perhaps Lewis comes close. Milton, of course, plays a major role in the history of which Lewis seeks to be conscious, but I doubt that Lewis often copies him intentionally. It is (as Lewis writes of Milton's imitating an earlier author), "not conscious imitation: it is the involuntary reminiscence of a man steeped in another author" (SMRL 119).

Lewis (also a Christian) follows Milton's methods by using pagan myths. His science fiction and children's stories continue to sell well after nearly half a century because, like the great poet, he employs "feelings, phrases, images" with universal appeal. His purpose, too, mirrors Milton's: in justifying God's ways, both emphasize free will and the consequences of self-will. One critic calls Perelandra "an investigation of the nature of human psychological freedom and the power of choice" (Price 38).

Eliot's theory, therefore, applies to Lewis as much as to Milton, for in Perelandra, especially, Lewis makes use "of the timeless and of the temporal together" (Eliot 4). Old myths--pagan and Christian--live on in twentieth century science fiction. To paraphrase Mr. Eliot: it is in "the best, the most individual parts" of Lewis's works that Milton "asserts his immortality most vigorously" (4). Paradise Lost and its reinvigorated myths, though somewhat altered or modified, live on in Perelandra. Eliot continues:

> The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves,

> which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. . . . the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. (5, original emphasis)

Through Paradise Lost and Perelandra, "the whole existing order" of the Genesis story, and of pagan myths, are "ever so slightly altered" by the changes John Milton and C. S. Lewis work upon them.

This study, then, seeks to demonstrate how Milton's method (his use of pagan mythology) and purpose (to justify God's ways by emphasizing free will) have influenced Lewis's fiction. Perelandra will receive the most attention, but other of his works will be used as well. Paradise Lost, "modified by the introduction of the new," lives on in the works of C. S. Lewis.

2. The Authors: Christian Men and Pagan Myths

When Jacob ordered his clan to "put away the strange gods that are among you" (Genesis 35:2), he precipitated a struggle that lasts to this day. Although some religions permit, encourage, or require the belief in multiple deities, the Judeo-Christian Bible teaches its adherents to "have no other gods" but Yahweh (Exodus 20:3). Readers, then, well may wonder at the seemingly frequent and sympathetic treatment that pagan deities receive at the hands of Christian writers such as John Milton and C. S. Lewis. But readers should not assume that these men forsake or compromise their beliefs in order to create successful literature. On the contrary, Milton and Lewis endeavor to employ pagan mythology in God's service. Understanding how they do this will require an examination of their beliefs about pagan myths and a look at how they use them in their writing.

Milton and Lewis studied many of the same Greek and Latin writers (Osgood xlii-iii, SbJ 144), but the more than two centuries between them brought about significant differences in their respective reactions to what they read. Although Milton's early ideas about mythology represent those of the Renaissance, his later beliefs differ significantly from those of many of his contemporaries. Lewis's abandonment of twentieth-century beliefs about pagan mythology coincides with (and results in) his conversion to Christianity. His convictions about mythology and Christianity are crucial to his fiction, and I will devote more attention to the evolution of those convictions than of Milton's.

Beginning with the Christianization of Rome, a long series of events shaped Renaissance views of pagan mythology. Rome did not easily

abandon its many deities for one Deity, and historian Jean Seznec describes how countless pagan icons simply had new names and functions ascribed to them so that the Church might not destroy them (104-5). Lewis writes that intellectuals of the time moved in "a circle in which Christian and Pagan could freely mingle" (DI 60). He describes a period (from 205 to 533) during which there was a transition from the primacy of paganism to that of Christianity. Literature then has "sometimes raised a doubt whether its author was Pagan or Christian"; a writer could publish "much that was acceptable to many Christian and many Pagan readers, provided his work was not explicitly theological" (DI 45-7).

Within scripture medieval Christians found a celebration of eros, the Song of Solomon. Lovers therein praise each other's beauty, singing clearly of sexual parts and pleasure, and the celibate clergy soon began to treat the book as an allegory of Christ's love for His bride, the Church (Bush Mythology 16, Seznec 88). That accomplished, pagan myths began to reappear in the guise of Christian allegory, and Renaissance Europeans busily used allegory to rejuvenate myth after myth. Bush says that "no tale was too sensuous and pagan to yield its quota of theological and moral lessons" (Mythology 17). But this "sanctification" of pagan art and literature did not spread unopposed. Savonarola, Italy's renowned "purifier," destroyed unknown quantities of ancient art and literature in his denunciation of heathenism/hedonism in the 1490's.

Into the English Renaissance, which began much later than Italy's, Milton was born in 1608. Edmund Spenser had been dead for eight years, and William Shakespeare had another eight to live. Working in London as a scrivener, Milton's father gained sufficient wealth to send his son

to St. Paul's School and Christ College, Cambridge. He augmented this rigorous education by providing Milton with private tutors, three years of independent study, and a fourteen-month European tour. Milton so excelled in his study of the classics that, before turning seventeen, he had written many poems using what he had read in them.

His first major success, the masque Comus, employs the Circe myth. Bush claims the myth left a deep and permanent impress on Milton because he could harness it to preach reason over appetite and the spirit over the flesh (Mythology 265). The poet's skilled handling of that and other myths in Comus reveals an admiration for the myths themselves. Bush says Milton writes as "an heir of the Renaissance tradition, who has solemnly resolved to bring the finest pagan art to the exposition of the loftiest Christian truth" (Mythology 264). In English Renaissance literature, Milton, more than anyone else, effectively combines and harnesses pagan myths to serve Christianity. So broad and deep is his learning that, as Milton critic Charles Osgood points out, he transcends the mere stories and uses the "truth of these myths . . . more authoritatively and universally" than others (xliii). And as Milton grows in time more skilled in using mythology, his writings do not serve the myths; rather he controls and shapes and synthesizes the myths to serve his own purposes.

When, in Paradise Lost, he compares Eve to Narcissus (IV.453-69), or Venus (V.382-3), or Circe (IX.521-2), the mythological comparisons always illuminate (rather than overwhelm) some aspect of Eve. He does not call Narcissus or Venus by name, and their myths come so briefly to mind that they only enlarge upon, never distract from, one's image of

Eve. And Circe's name is used only as part of an adjective--much as "Satanic" evokes images of evil, rather than of Satan himself. Nor does Milton use Hercules's name, though his myth is evoked to shed light on Christ in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" (221-8), "The Passion" (10-14), and Paradise Regained (IV.563-71). When medieval churchmen, such as Bernard of Chartres and bishop Theodulph of Orleans "Christianize" the pagan myths to suit their purposes (Seznec 91), they merely throw white robes over dirty gods before inviting them in to dine and converse with God. Milton, on the other hand, allows pagan gods to quietly, humbly wait His table and wash His dishes only after they have bathed and learned to behave themselves. Rather than pretending goodness and glossing over evil in a myth, he praises and uses the good, execrates the evil, and gleans a lesson when possible.

But, as Milton ages, he uses mythology more conservatively. Though myths appear in his later works (Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes), they receive rather fleeting, reserved, or negative treatment. He celebrates the beauty of the myths themselves in his youthful, less sacred poems; but the epics, with which he justifies and glorifies his Creator, mention myths only to shed light on biblical stories, settings, or characters. He very briefly compares Raphael to Mercury (V.285), Eve to Circe (IX.521-2), and Satan to Pluto (IV.270), and gives fallen angels the names of pagan gods. Milton assumes that his "fit audience . . . though few" (VII.31) knows enough of those myths that he need not stray from the nobler Christian story to lesser diversions. Pagan myths may enjoy the limelight in his earlier poetry, but they shrink into foils and minor roles in his later, greater works. And

although Comus defends mythology as "not vain or fabulous" (line 513), Paradise Lost does call it fabulous (I.197, II.627, IV.250). The shift is unmistakable.

C. S. Lewis lived and died (1898-1963) two hundred ninety years after Milton, in a time when Greek and Latin classical literature no longer occupied as important a place in education, but he was just as enamored of mythology as the great poet had been. Born into a comfortable Protestant family near Belfast, he and his older brother, Warren, learned much from their "bookish or 'clever'" parents--their mother taught them French and Latin before they were ten (SbJ 4). Everywhere Lewis turned, there were books:

> . . . endless books. My father bought all the books he read and never got rid of any of them. There were books in the study, books in the drawing room, books in the cloakroom, books (two deep) in the great bookcase on the landing . . . books suitable for a child and books most emphatically not. Nothing was forbidden me. In the seemingly endless rainy afternoons I took volume after volume from the shelves. I had always the same certainty of finding a book that was new to me . . . (SbJ 10)

But his parents' library had little to offer in the literature of his choice; he preferred tales of "elfland" and "humanized animals" and "knights-in-armour" (Green 20-2). His imagination delighted in countless stories: those his County Down nurse told him (leprechauns and the like), the rabbits, mice, and squirrels of Beatrix Potter, and the many serialized and illustrated tales in the Strand Magazine (Green 21-2).

Soon Lewis and his brother were writing and illustrating their own "Animal-Land" or "Boxen" stories about chivalrous mice, rabbits, and frogs. Some have been rediscovered and preserved in Boxen, edited by Walter Hooper in 1985. Lewis had begun his mythopoeic writing by six!

The next important development in his lifelong love of myth came in 1911 when, at boarding school in England, he rediscovered "Joy" in Norse mythology. He had occasionally had, from his early childhood, "the stab, the pang, the inconsolable longing" or sehnsucht of Joy (SbJ 72). This Joy--which he calls "desire, not possession" (SbJ 166)--came unexpectedly, the result of several difficult-to-describe experiences or feelings. He mentions three: "Gardenness" and "Autumnness" and "Northernness" (SbJ 16-7). He had first found Northernness in Longfellow's poem based upon Tegner's (1825) version of Frithiop's Saga (SbJ 72-3). Then, at thirteen, Joy stabbed Lewis again upon seeing an Arthur Rackham illustration in a gramophone catalogue advertisement for Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods (SbJ 73). This evoked in him a piercing desire for the "cold, spacious, severe, pale, and remote" beauty he associated with the North: icy fjords, Viking warriors in their great halls, glaciers, blue-eyed Nordic maidens celebrating the return of their men (SbJ 17). From that moment on, he declared himself "enslaved by the Northernness" (SbJ 76).

Lewis's self-imposed slavery was expensive. What money he could cadge from father, brother, or friends, he spent on Wagner's Lohengrin, Das Rheingold, Die Walkure, Siegfried, and Gotterdammerung, Greuber's Myths of the Norsemen, Rolleston's Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race, and any sources of Northernness he could discover (Sbj 74-5, Sayer 52).

Years later, teaching at Oxford, Lewis discovered others interested in Nordic sagas. In their Old Icelandic language reading club, he indulged his love of its mythology (Carpenter 25-9).

In spite of his love for Northernness, very little Norse mythology appears in his writings. More in evidence are the classic Greek and Roman myths Lewis imbibed when, from 1914 to 1917, he lived and studied with a rigid elderly scholar named William Kirkpatrick. These three years of preparation for Oxford remarkably resemble Milton's three of independent study after Cambridge. He became fluent in Greek, Latin, French, and Italian, and greatly improved his German. Like Milton, he read (and memorized much of) countless works of great literature (SbJ 144). Milton's eyesight had suffered from endless study, and Kirkpatrick (in a letter to Lewis's father) tells of having to warn Lewis against damaging his eyes:

> I do not look on Clive as a schoolboy. The very idea of urging or stimulating him to increased exertion makes me smile. Rather have I had to act in the contrary direction, and to remind him that I find it inadvisable for him to read after 11 p.m. . . . He has read more classics . . . than any I have ever heard of . . . (Sayer 61)

And so, preparing for Oxford, Lewis steeped himself in classical Greek and Roman mythology. Although he failed twice to pass the entrance examination in basic mathematics, his other scores were sufficiently high to earn a scholarship (Sayer 64, Green 47-50). After a term in Oxford, the Army sent Lewis on his birthday in 1917 to the trenches of France for his share of World War I. Four months and three wounds

later, he returned to England to convalesce. Before he could recover sufficiently to fight again, Germany surrendered, and he returned to Oxford, where he lived the rest of his life.

From 1915 to 1918--at Kirkpatrick's, in Oxford, in the trenches, and in hospital--Lewis had worked on a cycle of lyrics. In March 1919, William Heinemann published the poems in a small book entitled Spirits in Bondage, after a line (I.658) in Paradise Lost. Although replete with fauns, satyrs, dryads, elves, and faeries, the poems show the pessimistic influence of materialistic rationalism and the writings of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Wagner (SiB xix-xxi). He employed the poetry to shake an angry fist at a God whose existence he denied. Lewis describes his attitude at that time:

> I was at this time living, like so many Atheists or Antitheists, in a whirl of contradictions. I maintained that God did not exist. I was also very angry with God for not existing. I was equally angry with Him for creating a world. (SbJ 115)

Although young Milton used classical mythology in poetry which praised God, pessimistic young Lewis did the same in poetry that attacked God or denied His existence altogether. Lewis's attitude toward mythology and his materialistic, rationalistic view of the universe put him in an increasingly uncomfortable position:

> The two hemispheres of my mind were in the sharpest contrast. On the one side a many-islanded sea of poetry and myth; on the other a glib and shallow "rationalism." Nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless . . . I could almost

> have said with Santayana, "All that is good is imaginary; all that is real is evil." . . . Such, then, was my position: to care for almost nothing but the gods and heroes, the garden of the Hesperides, Launcelot and the Grail, and to believe in nothing but atoms and evolution . . . (SbJ 170-4)

But something happened in 1921 which threatened the security of Lewis's materialistic rationalism. He had been reading and admiring the works of William Butler Yeats, and was unexpectedly invited to meet the man. Yeats shook (but did not destroy) Lewis's materialism, for he actually believed in a world of supernatural beings. Because Lewis "regarded Yeats as a learned, responsible writer, what he said must be worthy of consideration" (SbJ 175). Yeats led him to read Maeterlinck, the Belgian spiritualist poet, and Lewis felt deeply disturbed that two great minds firmly believed in the preternatural. Had they been Christians, he would have dismissed them out of hand. But they were just convinced supernaturalists, not Christians, and their beliefs precipitated the slow decline of Lewis's materialism.

In this frame of mind, Lewis struggled through nearly ten years at Oxford. During his undergraduate studies, he earned highest marks in three degrees: "Honour Mods" (Greek and Latin texts), "Greats" (classical philosophy), and English language and literature (NP ix). After completing his English studies, he was for two years a nearly penniless scholar. Finally, in 1925, Magdalen College awarded Lewis a fellowship, a position which paid enough to meet his needs and kept him very busy tutoring undergraduates, grading papers, and preparing lectures. Until Cambridge invited him to a professorship established in his honor almost

thirty years later, he lived the rigorous life of a university don.

Studying and teaching at Oxford enabled Lewis to meet several men whose friendship changed both his concept of myth and the course of his life. Owen Barfield--whom he grew to love and with whom he disagreed on almost everything--destroyed the materialism that Yeats had weakened. Barfield used an argument something like this: if mind is only an evolutionary accident--matter plus energy plus chance--why should we trust one accident's (one mind's) explanation of another accident (the evolution of mind)? Materialism, the accidental product of another accident, can therefore be proven neither necessarily true nor necessarily false. A materialist's theories about snails can have no more validity, verity, or significance than their theories about him. Because materialists' theories undermine their right to theorize, Lewis had to admit the possibility of something (at the very least, mind) existing outside the materialistic realm of empirical verifiability.

Barfield, furthermore, exposed Lewis's "chronological snobbery," his "uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited" (SbJ 207). He showed Lewis that one should ask <u>why</u> some belief had lost its hold--whether it had been conclusively proven false or has simply passed out of fashion (which has nothing to do with truth or falsity--only popularity). Lewis's realization of his two errors sent him back to re-examine the ideas (such as atheism) he had accepted partly by virtue of their modernity. Barfield had opened for Lewis the intellectual possibility of the supernatural.

Another important friend at this time was Nevill Coghill. In his

fourth year at Oxford, Lewis discovered that Coghill, "clearly the most intelligent and best-informed man in that class--was a Christian and a thorough-going supernaturalist" (SbJ 212). This reminded him that he had enjoyed reading George MacDonald, even though he, too, was rather religious. And he liked everything about G. K. Chesterton except that he was a Christian. The same was true of Spenser. And Langland, and Milton, and Johnson, and Donne, Herbert, and Browne. Even his favorite ancients--Plato, Aeschylus, and Virgil--were the most religious. Those with whom he shared the most philosophically--men like Voltaire, Gibbon, Mill, Shaw, and Wells--Lewis calls "a little thin; it wasn't that I didn't like them. They were all entertaining; but hardly more. There seemed to be no depth in them. They were too simple" (SbJ 213-4). He began to think that "Christians are wrong, but all the rest are bores" (SbJ 214). This so bothered him that he wondered if perhaps there was something behind it. Tolkien helped him find the answer.

J. R. R. Tolkien, professor of Anglo Saxon at Merton College, and creator of hobbits, also became one of Lewis's dearest friends. Both enjoyed the same slavery to Northernness (Tolkien was a member of the Icelandic Society), and both enjoyed the same parts of the same literature for the same reasons. They talked at first about the mythology that pierced them with longing, but turned eventually to wondering what made something a myth, and what caused a myth to have such an effect upon people. Years passed before they agreed upon an answer. One night Lewis walked and talked till long past midnight with Tolkien and another friend, Hugo Dyson (Carpenter 42). That conversation changed Lewis's life--he calls Tolkien and Dyson the "immediate human causes of

my conversion" (LET 197)--and its contents appear in many of Lewis's writings. Their ideas become the basis for his theory of mythology.

Milton says that "many are the shapes of things divine" (quoted in Bush, Mythology 248), but Lewis goes even further. He believes our myths are hints or glimmers of truth sent by God to stimulate in people a longing for Heaven and for Himself. He also thinks that the historical, poetical, and theological contents of the Bible are that about which human myths hint. History (and especially Christ's part in it) is God's Story, and what Christ does for mankind is the eucatastrophe of The Story. When pagan myths resemble in some way their Christian counterparts, Lewis says, "the similarity is not in the least unreal or accidental" (MIR 15). It is "a likeness permitted by God" (RP 107), "a divine hinting" of what will come (GiD 132). Pagan stories, as he says elsewhere, "are mere beginnings--the first, faint whisper of the wind from beyond the world" (LAG 430). Tolkien calls them "splintered fragment[s] of the true light. Pagan myths are therefore never just 'lies': there is always something of the truth in them" (Carpenter 43). And Lewis calls them "real though unfocused gleam[s] of divine truth falling on human imagination" (MIR 134). Although Lewis, perhaps exaggerating, says that "no one ever influenced Tolkien" (LET 287), Tolkien evidently influenced Lewis's theories about mythology.

In The Pilgrim's Regress (152-7), Lewis calls the fragments of true light "pictures" sent to the pagans by the "Landlord" (God). Before the "Rules" (the Bible) were available, the Landlord sent many pictures to show them enough about Himself to enable them to choose between Him and the Enemy. Some pagans remain illiterate all their lives, while others

never even see the Rules. For these, pictures will suffice. "The Landlord . . . sends them pictures and stirs up sweet desire" (152). And because people are predisposed to long for different things,

> The Landlord sends pictures of many different kinds. What is universal is not the particular picture, but the arrival of some message, not perfectly intelligible, which wakes this desire and sets men longing for something . . . (156-7)

Some are more sensitive to pictures and longings than others. Lewis says we must stop evaluating the story, empty ourselves of all sophistry, and "get ourselves out of the way" to make room for the picture or myth (EC 92-3).

Lewis was himself, except during several years of teen-aged "priggery," unusually aware both of the pictures and of the longing they aroused in him. His intellectual (or spiritual) autobiography, Surprised by Joy, recounts how that longing finally leads him--after many questions, wrong turns, hints, pictures, or myths--to realize that God has all along been the source of his desire, the source of all Joy. Behind the beauty of all myths (and art, poetry, music, nature, etc.) something exists "which rouses desires that no finite object even pretends to satisfy, [and] can be argued not to be any product of our own minds" (LET 144, original emphasis). Our desire for Joy is a desire for God, "a desire which no natural happiness will satisfy" (WoG 8). Myths are humanity's finite expressions of longing for the Infinite, from which the yearning originates. And God puts that desire into people in order to draw them toward Truth, toward Himself. Lewis's pilgrim seeks Joy by going "halfway round the world to reach what Uncle

George reached in a mile or so" (PR 173), and Lewis himself goes the long way round to learn what he had often as a boy read in his Bible: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). He has to become as a child and get himself out of the way to learn that he has all along been yearning for the God he resists.

Acknowledging the existence of a Supreme Being behind the mythologies he so dearly loved made Lewis uncomfortable, but it did not make him a Christian. He thought that the legend about the Jewish fellow (Y'shua or Jesus) dying and coming back to life was simply one more "corn king" myth. But an incident some time before his talk with Dyson and Tolkien had undermined this assumption. He describes how "the hardest boiled of all the atheists I ever knew" came into his room one evening and "remarked that the evidence for the historicity of the Gospels was really surprisingly good." This person said that the story about the dying god "looks as if it really happened once" (SbJ 223-4). Lewis was stunned. If "the cynic of cynics" thought the Gospels reliable, he had to re-examine them. He looked long and hard into the historicity of the New Testament and arrived at the same conclusion.

Here Tolkien and Dyson could help him again. Lewis describes how the discussion led him to understand Jesus and the corn kings:

> Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that <u>it really happened</u>: . . . it is God's myth where the others are men's myths: i.e. the Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using such images as He found there, while Christianity is God

> expressing Himself through what we call 'real things'.
>
> (LAG 427, original emphasis)

Here, too, Lewis mirrors Milton, though whether he derived his theory from the poet or arrived at it independently is open to speculation. Milton scholar Basil Willey summarizes Milton's view of history: biblical/historical events are allegories "written" by God; and "when God allegorises He does not merely write or inspire parables, He also causes to happen the events which can be allegorically interpreted" (236). The idea of "God expressing Himself" in history is an important one for Christian "sub-creators"--those who create worlds and stories somewhat as God creates worlds and stories. In order for these sub-creators to succeed, they must create stories that point readers not just to the author, but ultimately beyond the author to his Creator. When J. R. R. Tolkien creates Middle Earth, complete with history and geography, he imitates what he has seen God do, for, as Lewis puts it, "history is a story written by the finger of God" (XR 104). In his essay, "Myth Become Fact," Lewis explains more clearly how God expresses Himself in history ("His Story") through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of His Son. The explanation is also the best example of the intersection of Lewis's mythology and his Christology:

> The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, <u>without ceasing to be myth</u>, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It <u>happens</u>--at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences. We pass from a Balder or an Osiris, dying nobody

> knows when or where, to a historical Person crucified (it is all in order) under Pontius Pilate. By becoming fact it does not cease to be myth . . .
>
> We must not be ashamed of the mythical radiance resting on our theology. We must not be nervous about 'parallels' and 'Pagan Christs': they ought to be there . . . this is the marriage of heaven and earth: Perfect Myth and Perfect Fact: claiming not only our love and our obedience, but also our wonder and delight . . . (GiD 66-7, original emphasis)

When Lewis struggles against the existence of God and the historicity of Christ, he does so largely out of fear that following Christ will mean abandoning forever the myths that arouse such Joy in him. But, to his great relief and delight, he learns that he need not abstain from old myths any more than one needs to abstain from milk once one eats solid food. "Paganism had only been the childhood of religion" (SbJ 235); and childhood is merely simplistic, incomplete, and unfulfilled--not evil. Maturity need not completely exclude childhood joys; and few adults visit the joyous myths of their (physical and spiritual) childhood as often or as productively as Lewis.

Others before Lewis had wondered about "pagan Christs" and the similarities between scripture and pagan myths. In Preface to Milton, Lois Potter writes that Milton and other Renaissance humanists

> knew that there were Greek and Roman myths about a great flood, a hero whose strength lay in his hair, a miraculous birth and a hero who died and was restored to life. This did not make them think that Christianity was a fairy tale;

> rather, it seemed to them to prove that there was one true religion of which all human beings had been granted some shadowy glimpses . . . Christianity, for him, was literally true, while the classical myths were either symbols of it or allegories of moral truths. (154)

Although she describes the early Milton, it sounds as though she could be describing Lewis. But as Milton grew older, his view of pagan myths changed. His later works imply that such myths are "false and unprofitable" (Osgood xlviii). Lewis describes two views in a discussion of "Pagan Christs":

> The Christians would fall into two schools of thought. The early Fathers (or some of them), who believed that Paganism was nothing but the direct work of the Devil, would say: "The Devil has from the beginning tried to mislead humanity with lies. As all accomplished liars do, he makes his lies as like the truth as he can . . . it is the resemblance between a counterfeit and the real thing . . ." Other Christians who think, as I do, that in mythology divine and diabolical and human elements . . . all play a part, would say: "It is not accidental . . . The resemblance between these myths and the Christian truth is no more accidental than the resemblance between the sun and the sun's reflection . . ." (RP 106-7).

Although Milton's early writings are sympathetic to mythology, his later works describe it as false and misleading. Lewis, on the other hand, belongs to the latter school of thought. From saying "all that is good is imaginary" (SbJ 170), he moves to saying that all our imaginary good

points toward God's real, historical, factual good. Through a long, circuitous route, he moves to near where Milton begins.

When Lewis describes what he, Tolkien, and Dyson agreed upon about the relationship between Christianity and classical mythology, he also indicates the relationship between Christianity and the mythology in his own fiction. From Out of the Silent Planet in 1938 through Till We Have Faces in 1956, the "hints" and resemblances are also "not accidental." One can feel the "faint whisper of the wind from beyond the world" and see the "real though unfocused gleam of divine truth falling on human imagination" (LAG 430, MIR 134). By employing his mythopoeia to point readers to the Source of all Myth, Lewis imitates Spenser and Milton, whom he describes as "using mythological forms to hint theological truths" in The Faerie Queene and Comus (AoL 355). After recounting his own conversion in allegory (The Pilgrim's Regress), he successfully avoids heavy-handed propagation or homily. His writings do not allegorize his beliefs; they only subtly hint at them (Schumaker 63).

And Lewis makes theology perceptually available in fiction by doing the opposite of what many others have done. While Chesterton's Father Brown mysteries bring stories into the church, Lewis succeeds in Narnia by "casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, . . . mak[ing] them for the first time appear in their real potency" (OS 47). He takes God's story out of the church. He finds organized religion or churchmanship "wholly unattractive" (SbJ 233-4), and he is not alone. If a great, good lion (Aslan) could give his life for a naughty boy, then the significance of the crucifixion story would not have to be suffocated by

the weight of two thousand years' tradition and vocabulary. Unencumbered by strange Roman or Palestinian names, customs, and geography, or by terms like "substitutionary atonement," Lewis can show the enormity of the Passion through Aslan's death in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. And no more simple but potent statement of theological truth has been smuggled into fiction than Mrs. Beaver's comment about Aslan: "He isn't safe, but He's good" (LWW 76).

But theological truth is not Lewis's intent when he starts his stories. He denies that he "began [Narnia] by asking myself how I could say something about Christianity to children" (OS 46), or that he "constructed Perelandra for the didactic purpose" (OS 144). "All my seven Narnian books, and my three science-fiction books, began with seeing pictures in my head. At first they were not a story, just pictures" (OS 53). First an image, then a story, then the story "force[s] its moral upon you" (OS 144-5). In this sense, he is merely a receiver or translator of truth-via-myth, rather than a creator of such things. He receives images, stories, and morals. Both Milton (Paradise Lost I.6) and Lewis (Perelandra 201) speak of receiving such things from a Muse easily identified with the Holy Spirit. It is in the expression of the myth--its translation into words--that the authors themselves exercise tremendous freedom and ability.

Lewis leads readers into Narnia in the cleverest of ways: Lucy, the youngest of the children, plays "hide and go seek" with her older siblings. When she stumbles through a wardrobe into another world, she thinks it "queer" and feels a little frightened. But, because no one has ever taught her precisely what is normal and what is not, she pro-

ceeds. An adult would be shattered. Because Lucy is the youngest, the underdog, readers naturally side with her when she tries desperately to convince her brothers and sister that she is not lying. Because those insisting on "reality" are perceived as antagonists, readers let down their guard and side with the fairy tale.

The Bible frequently gives one the impression that one bases values and a sense of reality on faulty assumptions. The Sermon on the Mount is a list of such assumptions. Christ's parables, furthermore, show that He can pack more lessons into fiction than can be found in centuries of Old Testament history. Reality is not a prerequisite for truth.

Like Milton, who "was not consciously preoccupied with the demarcation of truth from fiction" (Willey 236), Lewis "ignores the frontier between 'realism' and fantasy," even going so far as to "deny altogether that it exists" (Howard 89-90). When Peter asks the old professor if Lucy is lying about her visit to Narnia, he doesn't think so. "But do you really mean . . . that there could be other worlds--all over the place [or] just round the corner . . .?" The professor believes that "nothing is more probable" (LWW 46). Heaven and its angels, though not visible to the mortal eye, also wait "just round the corner." Jesus told His disciples that, at any moment, He could summon "twelve legions of angels" (Matthew 26:53). In Perelandra, in fact, the narrator comes face to "face" with something like an angel. Through "sheer bad luck" (by being a fellow professor at the protagonist Ransom's university), the narrator is "drawn in" to the intersection of real and fabulous (10-11). When he discovers that angels ("eldila") are, in fact, real

beings, he must acknowledge that his species enjoys a narrow, self-blinded point of view:

> The distinction between natural and supernatural, in fact, broke down; and when it had done so, one realised how great a comfort it had been--how it had eased the burden of intolerable strangeness which this universe imposes on us by dividing it into two halves and encouraging the mind never to think of both in the same context. What price we may have paid for this comfort in the way of false security and accepted confusion of thought is another matter. (11)

And in Out of the Silent Planet, the book preceding Perelandra, Ransom learns that "the distinction between history and mythology might be itself meaningless outside the Earth" (144-5). His voyages to other planets teach him that his humano-centric concept of reality is no less blind than terra-centric, Ptolemaic astronomy. Events on other planets matter as much as those on Earth.

Lewis also makes myth and history exchange places from one planet to the next, so that what we call myth on our planet actually happens in the history of another. Early in his time on Perelandra, Ransom sees the Golden Dragon coiled round the Hesperian Tree and wonders whether "all the things which appeared as mythology on Earth [were] scattered through other worlds as realities" (PER 45). After a while, reflecting upon his recent activities on the planet, he feels as though he were "enacting a myth" (47). Evidently, the key to myth and fact is perspective. When Lucy encounters the faun, she shakes his sense of reality. He has until then believed that humans were only legendary,

and among his books Lucy sees one entitled Is Man a Myth? (LWW 12). Narnians think of humans just as humans think of fauns, unicorns, and dryads. Narnia, furthermore, is flat, and, as Prince Caspian tells Edmund, "we have fairy-tales in which there are round [spherical] worlds" (VDT 201). And when, in Perelandra, Ransom eats some of the water-people's food, his perspective is temporarily altered so that he regards their underwater existence as "real" and his own above-water life as either myth or miracle (162). The surface of the water briefly seems to him like the sky, and the floating islands like clouds, so that he thinks it fantastic that anyone could walk on them. Eating the food of mermen and mermaids enables him to confirm "his old suspicion that what was myth in one world might always be fact in some other" (PER 102). What a species regards as myth depends entirely upon what, for them, is reality. One world's reality is another world's myth:

> . . . he perceived that you might just as well call Perelandra, not Tellus, the centre . . . one was neither more nor less true than the other. Nothing was more or less important than anything else . . . (PER 145)

According to Lewis, then, the significance of myth varies with one's location in space.

To a lesser degree, the significance of myth also varies with one's time. The farther back in (Earth's) history one lives, the more likely is one to feel that the universe teems with supernatural life. But modern science chases away the supernatural:

> We can observe a single one-way progression. At the outset the universe appears packed with will, intelligence, life and

> positive qualities; every tree is a nymph and every planet a god. Man himself is akin to the gods. The advance of knowledge gradually empties this rich and genial universe: first of its gods, then of its colours, smells, sounds and tastes, finally of solidity itself as solidity was originally imagined. (PC 81)

Advances in scientific knowledge result in the retreat of mystery. When science takes people to the Moon, Lewis says that it steals one of our richest sources of myth: "The immemorial Moon--the Moon of the myths, the poets, the lovers--will have been taken from us forever" (XR 173). Were he alive, he would dread the Magellan Probe's rendezvous with his favorite planet, which he renamed Perelandra. But when his wife desperately needed advanced science to stave off the onslaught of cancer, he was grateful for whatever it could offer. As a scholar of classical and medieval mythology, and as a mythopoeic writer, however, he considered the progress of science a war on myth.

But the fact that the Source of myth lies outside the limitations of space and time must have encouraged Lewis. Far beyond the reach of science, and the quickening pace of its conquests, safely lies the well-spring of pictures, images, mythologies, histories, and appearances of reality. What each species thinks "real" is only the appearance of that thing as granted to that species by its Source, by God. When, for example, Ransom asks an archangel if he (Ransom) is seeing angels as they really are, the archangel replies that "only Maleldil [God] sees any creature as it really is . . . you have never seen more than an appearance of anything" (PER 202). Ransom learns that,

> Our mythology is based on a solider reality than we dream: but it is also at an almost infinite distance from that base. And when they told him this, Ransom at last understood why mythology was what it was--gleams of celestial strength and beauty falling on a jungle of filth and imbecility. (PER 201)

Lewis's choice to express reality in terms of solidity offers a clue as to just what is the "base" of all mythologies and realities. In The Great Divorce Lewis depicts Heaven's topography and inhabitants as more solid than Earth's or Hell's. Visitors from either place are transparent and insubstantial, like "man-shaped stains on the brightness" (27). People have not become less real; rather, Heaven is simply much more real than they are:

> The men were as they had always been . . . it was the light, the grass, the trees that were different; made of some different substance, so much solider than things in our country that men were ghosts by comparison. (28)

Heaven is "the Real World" (GD 122), and life on Earth is "the Shadow-Lands" (LB 183). Compare this to Milton's Raphael wondering whether "Earth / Be but the shadow of Heav'n" (V.574-5). For those who enter Lewis's Heaven, "the dream is ended," it is "the end of all the stories" and "the beginning of the real story" (LB 183-4, my emphasis). By implication, life on Earth is a mere shadow of what it could be were it not fallen. Heaven and its residents are more real because they have not been robbed of their mystery or dulled by the Fall. They still (or again) belong to the Source of Myth.

Lewis's fiction endeavors to restore to the universe its proper

mystery--the sort of mystery present when one assumes that Heaven can "intrude" upon the normal course of earthly life. "The value of the myth is that it takes all the things we know and restores to them the rich significance which has been hidden by 'the veil of familiarity'" (OS 90). His mythopoeia remythologizes what scientific knowledge and everyday life have demythologized and made familiar.

The differences between Milton's and Lewis's concept of myth and treatment of myth, then, are more significant than they may first seem. In Paradise Lost, Milton employs pagan myths because they can be useful in describing and adorning various elements of the Christian work he is about. He does not draw attention to the myths themselves any more than one might draw attention to longness or blondeness when describing a beautiful princess with long, blonde hair. He uses myths without celebrating them, milking them for whatever truth or insight they might lend his work. They are mere paltry slaves of the epic, with a tendency to distract readers from the Story at hand, slaves to be removed if once they do distract from his high purpose, that of glorifying God.

To Lewis, however, myths are not distractions, but God-given clues or pointers, intended to lead people toward--not away from--God. Myths are not slaves, but sons and daughters, resembling the King's truth just enough to make people yearn for the King Himself. Myths are not human or diabolical inventions intended to lead people away from God, but pictures and stories sent by God to draw people to Himself. Stories point to The Story (of Salvation), places point to The Place (Heaven), and kings and gods point to The King of Kings.

3. The Settings: A Pair of Paradises

When George Washington replaced King George III as ruler of the thirteen original American colonies, the two men looked so much alike that a "King George Inn" could become a "George Washington Inn" without changing the portrait on the sign. Similarly, as my previous chapter points out, when Christianity replaced paganism in Europe, artistic portrayals of pagan myths were often only subtly altered or simply renamed to survive Christianization.

The locus amoenus, or lovely place, appears widely in classical mythology. The Garden of Adonis, Island of Hesperus, Elysian Fields, Vale of Tempe, Blessed Isles, and Mount Olympus are just a few of its manifestations. It is in some stories the home of the gods; in other stories, the reward for a good life; and in others, a lovely, secret garden on earth. In each case, the locus amoenus offers beauty, safety and pleasure. The myth consistently uses several devices to make the locus a lovely one. Tracing connections between more recent European literature and that of the Latin Middle Ages, Ernst Curtius was perhaps the first to point out the locus amoenus's existence as "an independent rhetorico-poetical" entity (195). He lists seven important "charms of landscape": trees, fruit, flowers, water, birdsong, fields or plains, and fragrant breezes (195-8). Milton and Lewis employ each of these "charms" in their use of the locus amoenus.

To retain the locus amoenus from pagan literature, Christians identified it with Eden or Heaven. This was as true of John Milton in the seventeenth century and C. S. Lewis in the twentieth as of those who first began transposing mythologies centuries earlier.

Milton's Edenic paradise reveals his familiarity with, and use of, the locus amoenus myth. With an Eliotic "consciousness of the past," Milton creates his Paradise to add to and alter the myth's "existing monument"--its appearances in the works of the ancients and (especially) in those of Dante and Spenser. Lewis's settings also reveal their author's knowledge of the locus amoenus tradition. His study of Greek and Latin literature, and of Dante, Spenser, and Milton, led Lewis, like Milton, to add to and alter the myth. He, too, treats the myth's "existing monument" with a "consciousness of the past." Lewis's fiction shares not only Paradise Lost's method, but also its motive. Both authors--Lewis less obviously than Milton--attempt to "justify the ways of God to men," and, to that end, both use elements of the locus amoenus to emphasize the free will of His rational creatures.

This chapter, therefore, will examine how the myth asserts its immortality in the settings of Paradise Lost and Lewis's fiction, how the authors use those settings to focus on God's gift of free will, and how their settings employ the pagan myth to direct their readers toward Christianity's Heaven. Before I examine the authors' use of the seven elements of the locus amoenus, two things must be addressed: first, Lewis's autobiographical statements about his life-long desire for such a place; and secondly, the mountains and islands upon which Milton and Lewis locate their loci amoeni.

Central to an understanding of Lewis's thinking and writing is his concept of sehnsucht, or longing. In his autobiography, Surprised by Joy, he describes his life as a process of discovering longings and trying to fulfill them. One of his most poignant desires is for a locus

amoenus; it is "the world-wide dream of the happy garden--the island of the Hesperides, the earthly paradise" (AoL 119-20), and Surprised by Joy tells how this dream brightens his dreary childhood:

> Once in those very early days my brother brought into the nursery the lid of a biscuit tin which he had covered with moss and garnished with twigs and flowers so as to make it a toy garden or a toy forest. That was the first beauty I ever knew . . . As long as I live my imagination of Paradise will retain something of my brother's toy garden. (7)

The longing for and dreaming of such a lovely place did not remain for Lewis merely an occasional childhood daydream. He traces the longing from his childhood to his adult writings:

> From at least the age of six, romantic longing--Sehnsucht--had played an unusually central part in my experience. Such longing is in itself the very reverse of wishful thinking: it is more like thoughtful wishing. But it throws off what may be called systems of imagery. One among many such which it had thrown off for me was the Hesperian or Western Garden system, mainly derived from Euripides, Milton, Morris, and the early Yeats. (NP 4)

And so the Hesperian myth plays a major role in his writings, for it appears by name in at least eleven books (AoL 119-20, EC 43, LAG 198, NP 4, 71, PER 45, PPL 51, SbJ 169, 204, 220, SiB 65, SIL 23, SLE 296, and SMRL 166). He could leave his childhood desires in his nursery, or hide them in a private corner of his imagination, but, along with a childlike curiosity and imagination (EC 72), Lewis chooses not to let

them dissipate. He recognizes them for what they are, guards them, listens to them, and finally cultivates them into some of his writing's most productive forces. His conclusions about the satisfaction of those desires appear toward the end of this chapter.

At six, Lewis also begins to notice hills or mountains:

> . . . every day there were what we called "the Green Hills"; that is, the low line of the Castlereagh Hills which we saw from the nursery windows. They were not very far off but they were, to children, quite unattainable. They taught me longing--Sehnsucht . . . (SbJ 7)

When he later reads Dante, Spenser, and Milton, he finds gardens at the tops of mountains, and his longings for gardens and mountains merge. In Purgatory, the second of three books in The Divine Comedy, Dante tells of climbing Mount Purgatory. At the summit, in Cantos XVII-XVIII, he finds the Sacred Wood, his version of the locus amoenus. Spenser, too, puts his lovely place atop a mountain in the middle of Paradise (III.vi.43). One should not be surprised, therefore, that Milton also puts Eden on the summit of a high mountain. It sits atop a "steep savage Hill" (IV.172), "whose hairy sides / With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild" (VI.135-6), are a green wilderness of luxuriant growth. Nor should one be surprised that Lewis follows his mentors with mountaintop loci amoeni.

Although the whole of Perelandra is, in effect, a lovely place, its loveliest places can be found on its peaks. Ransom learns this when he climbs the Fixed Land's highest mountains (80 and 193). In Out of the Silent Planet, he meets the eldila and the Oyarsa (Archangel) in a grove

on the crown of an island (118). But in The Chronicles of Narnia the resemblance to Spenser's and Milton's gardens borders on replication. In The Magician's Nephew, just as Satan, Uriel, and Raphael do in Paradise Lost (Books IV and V), the children fly to "the steep green hill" and land just outside the garden:

> All round the very top of the hill ran a high wall of green turf. Inside the wall trees were growing. Their branches hung out over the wall: their leaves showed not only green but also blue and silver when the wind stirred them. (MN 157)

The description in The Last Battle is much the same:

> . . . they saw a smooth green hill. Its sides were as steep as the sides of a pyramid and round the top of it ran a green wall: but above the wall rose the branches of trees, whose leaves looked like silver and their fruit like gold. (176)

Those words appear almost to be a paraphrase of the following description of Eden in Paradise Lost:

> The verdurous wall of Paradise up sprung . . .
> And higher than that Wall a circling row
> Of goodliest Trees loaden with fairest Fruit,
> Blossoms and Fruits at once of golden hue
> Appear'd, with gay enamell'd colors mixt . . . (IV.143, 6-9)

And Milton's lines are heavily influenced by a stanza (III.vi.43) from Spenser's Faerie Queene, which lines Lewis examines in Spenser's Images of Life (50-61):

> Right in the middest of that Paradise,

There stood a stately Mount, on whose round top
A gloomy groue of mirtle trees did rise,
Whose shadie boughes sharpe steele did neuer lop,
Nor wicked beasts their tender buds did crop,
But like a girlond compassed the hight,
And from their fruitfull sides sweet gum did drop,
That all the ground with precious deaw bedight,
Threw forth most dainty odours, and most sweet delight.

Spenser and Milton protect their gardens with a wall of trees, and Lewis imitates them in Narnia. Perelandra's mountain, however, follows Dante's version. Before entering the garden at Mount Purgatory's summit, Dante must pass through a wall of fire (XXVII.10-57). Dorothy Sayers, translator-editor of The Divine Comedy, claims the wall of fire "represents the flaming sword of the Cherubim who guard the entrance to the Garden of Eden" (285). These same sword-bearing angels, first mentioned in Genesis 3:24, also guard the entrance to Perelandra's mountaintop garden (193). People who miss the riches of older literature may unknowingly encounter fragments of The Divine Comedy, The Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost in their twentieth-century children's stories and science fiction.

Although Lewis writes mostly of loci amoeni at the tops of mountains, they also appear on islands. When Ransom climbs mountains to meet Oyarsa--both in Out of the Silent Planet (118) and in Perelandra (203)--the peaks are the crowns of islands. The floating islands of Perelandra are not themselves loci amoeni, for the whole planet is an unspoiled paradise. In The Pilgrim's Regress, John longs for an island

which appears to him in a piercingly sweet vision. When an arduous pilgrimage finally brings him to the island, he discovers that it is actually the Mount of God, and that he has been longing for Heaven (172-3). Two of Lewis's poems, "Hesperus" (SiB 65) and "The Nameless Isle" (NP 105), also describe loci amoeni on islands. Islands are, of course, mountains in the sea, and all of his gardens, therefore, are in some way above their surroundings.

Whether on mountains or islands, those places' seven individual elements or "charms" clearly tie them to the locus amoenus tradition. The first charm, that of trees, is most obvious because it usually separates and protects, by virtue of sheer vertical size, that within from that without the locus amoenus. (In That Hideous Strength [20] Lewis accomplishes the separation and protection of Bragdon Wood from the advance of corrupting modernism with high, man-made walls rather than with trees.) Walls of trees enclose gardens in The Faerie Queene, Paradise Lost, and The Chronicles of Narnia, but within those walls trees also grow for the benefit of those who enter. In addition to the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, Milton's Eden contains "All Trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste" (IV.217). And the trees provide pleasing shade both in Eden (IV.245) and in Narnia (LB 178). Although many do not bear fruit (IV.139), those which do provide the second charm.

Fruits grow in the loci precisely to make them amoeni, to give pleasure to those who dwell therein. Milton's Eden offers its inhabitants a profusion, for the trees are "loaden with fairest Fruit" (IV.147), "savoury fruits, of taste to please" (V.304), and "Fruit of

delicious Vines, the growth of Heav'n" (V.635). And of Eden Milton writes:

> . . . God hath here
> Varied His bounty so with new delights,
> As may compare with Heaven . . . (V.430-2)

Such lines from the pen of a Puritan show that the word "puritanical" (which the 1982 American Heritage Dictionary defines as "regarding luxury or pleasure as sinful") stems from misunderstanding and hasty generalization.

Perelandra also has trees "loaded with . . . fruit" (45 and 46) and "bushes which carried a rich crop of . . . berries" (49). The flavors of its fruits defy description, for they discover to Ransom a "totally new genus of pleasures" (42). Lewis's trees whose fruit drip perfumed bubbles of "magical refreshment" (48), and his "floating paradises, where every grove dropped sweetness" (97), echo Milton's "Groves whose rich Trees wept odorous Gums and Balm" (IV.248) and Spenser's trees whose

> . . . fruitfull sides sweet gum did drop,
> That all the ground with precious deaw bedight,
> Threw forth most dainty odours, and most sweet delight.
> (Faerie Queene III.vi.43)

After Adam and Eve's "sweet Gard'ning labor," fruit trees feed them as they recline (IV.331-3). And, likewise, after subterranean battle with the Un-man, Ransom reclines under the shade of fruit-bearing vegetation. He "could reach [the fruit] without getting up," and they "seemed to bow themselves unasked into his upstretched hands" (PER 185). One can

hardly imagine more plethoric pleasure, nourishment, and tranquility.

Loci amoeni also appears elsewhere in Lewis's fiction. The Landlord's "mountain-apples"--which only "mountain-bred" tenants (angels) can eat--tempt people in The Pilgrim's Regress (79-81). Eating this allegorical equivalent of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil causes humans to become "infected." In Lewis's Great Divorce, the traveler discovers in Paradise a tree which, like the tree in the Hesperian myth, bears golden apples. And trees in Narnia's mountaintop garden grow "fruit like gold" (LB 176), "great silver apples" (MN 158), and "the Apple of Life" (MN 180). Narnia's locus amoenus, in fact, contains "the most delicious fruits and flowers of the world" (MN 156).

Flowers follow fruit as the third "charm of landscape" in loci amoeni. A tree may protect and shade, and a fruit may nourish, but a flower serves only to delight the senses. Milton's Eden boasts "Flow'rs of all hue, and without Thorn the Rose" (IV.256), and is "profuse of Flow'rs" (VIII.286). After walking in their garden, Adam and Eve rest in a field of flowers (IV.334). Then, when they make love, they lie in a "blissful Bower . . . chos'n by the sovran Planter . . . to man's delightful use" (IV.690-2). With blossoms of iris, rose, jessamin, violet, crocus, hyacinth, and "sweet-smelling Herbs / Espoused Eve deckt first her Nuptial Bed" (IV.697-710), while "on thir naked limbs the flow'ry roof / Show'r'd Roses" (IV.772-3).

Flowers are no less significant to Lewis's loci amoeni. He graces Narnia's garden with white blossoms (LB 178); and describes Perelandra's final pageant in "a valley pure rose-red": Maleldil covers the mountain with myriad flowers, "something like a lily but tinted like a rose"

(193). When Ransom leaves Perelandra, he takes only memories and rose-colored lilies; but the blossoms wilt when he arrives on Earth, for they need their native planet's air and water to survive.

Water, the next "charm of landscape," appears in a locus amoenus not just to ensure the survival of its inhabitants, but also to delight them. Puddles of rainwater here and there would suffice to provide Adam and Eve with enough drinking water, but they would not make Eden lovely enough. So Milton includes a great river (IV.223), streams (IV.233), "fresh fountains" (IV.229-37), "crisped Brooks" (IV.237), and a "clear Smooth Lake" (IV.459). In each case, they provide, not just for Adam's and Eve's survival, but also for the pleasure of their senses: refreshing taste, invigorating bathing, visible beauty, and pleasing sounds.

Pleasure is even more noticeable in Perelandra's water. When Ransom arrives on the planet, his coffin-like vehicle lands in ocean. Drinking gives him "a quite astonishing pleasure. It was almost like meeting Pleasure itself for the first time" (35). And swimming, which he calls "revelry in water--such glorious bathing," rewards him with feelings of coolness, freedom, novelty, delight, and even excessive pleasure (36-7). Lewis makes the ocean visibly beautiful as well: as great waves rise and fall, Ransom relishes the many shades of blue and green, "mountains of dimly lustrous water" (35, 50). Near the end of the novel, when Ransom arrives in Perelandra's mountaintop garden, from a cave flows a river colored amber--the same color as the River of Bliss which Milton describes flowing through Heaven (III.358-9). Finally, Lewis provides an unrippled pool of clear gold, with which the King bathes Ransom's bleeding heel just before Ransom returns to Earth (193,

220). Ransom's first and last experiences on Perelandra involve water.

The children enter Narnia through a wardrobe in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, but, in The Magician's Nephew, they enter by jumping into, and emerging from, pools of water. The pools themselves, however, serve only to transport--not please or refresh--the children. Narnia's garden has a fountain (MN 158), a river, and a waterfall (LB 180-2), but the most pleasing water appears elsewhere. An irresistibly "delicious rippling noise" informs the protagonist of The Silver Chair that she will find a stream on the Mountain of Aslan, which is not the mountain-top locus in The Magician's Nephew and The Last Battle (SC 17). Aslan's stream is "the coldest, most refreshing water," and "you didn't need to drink much of it, for it quenched your thirst at once" (SC 18), an allusion to the "living water" of which Christ speaks in John 4:10-4, 7:37-8, and Revelation 21:6. Paradises in The Pilgrim's Regress (171) and The Great Divorce (48-52) also include clear rivers and waterfalls, though we learn nothing of their taste or sound.

The fifth charm, the sound of birdsong, like the flowers, provides only pleasure and has nothing to do with survival needs. In Milton's Eden, "The birds thir quire apply" (IV.264) and join with all Creation in praising God (V.197-9). Birds there sing not only to God's glory, but also for the pleasure of Adam and Eve, both day (V.7-8) and night (V.40). In Narnia, the music of birds first indicates to Jill that she has left her nasty school and arrived on the Mountain of Aslan (SC 11). In The Pilgrim's Regress, John's "ears were full of the sounds of bird" upon entering the forests on the island he has been seeking (171). In Perelandra, finally, when Ransom emerges from his hellish struggle with

the Un-man, an animal, singing like a bird, greets him with a "tender, full-bellied, rich and golden-brown" song, "full of melody" and somewhat like a cello (185, 190). The sound comforts him as he rests and heals.

The next charm of landscape is landscape: some sort of clearing in the trees, such as one might call a meadow, plain, or field. Virgil's Elysian Fields come most easily to mind, and Milton mentions them twice in Book III (359, 472). Between the trees that crown Eden's mountaintop garden are "open fields" (IV.245), and "Lawns, or level Downs" (IV.252) where flocks graze undisturbed. The top of Aslan's Mountain has "an open glade" when Jill first arrives in The Silver Chair (15), but when the children return there at the end of The Last Battle, they find it more like the whole world. All countries, England and Narnia included, exist within Aslan's garden. Perelandra's final pageant unfolds in a valley at the summit of the planet's highest peak. More cup-shaped than level (193), it is an amphitheatre for the coronation ceremony. (Milton calls Eden "a woody Theatre" in IV.141). Although this charm may arise from pleasing contrast with surrounding woods and mountains, it is perhaps the most difficult to define, for almost any relatively horizontal, unwooded space might be called a field or a plain.

The seventh and last charm of landscape--that of gentle, fragrant breezes--gets substantial attention from both writers. Eve's "eager appetite" for the fatal fruit is "rais'd by the smell / So savoury of that Fruit. Aromas, likewise, inform Satan that he is approaching "delicious Paradise":

> . . . now gentle gales
> Fanning thir odoriferous wings dispense

> Native perfumes, and whisper whence they stole
> Those balmy spoils. As when to them who sail
> Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
> Mozambic, off at Sea North-East winds blow
> Sabean Odors from the spicy shore
> Of Araby the blest, with such delay
> Well pleas'd they slack thir course, and many a League
> Cheer'd with the grateful smell old Ocean smiles.
> So entertain'd those odorous sweets the Fiend
> Who came thir bane . . . (IV.156-67)

And when Raphael follows Satan into unfallen Eden, he passes

> Into the blissful field, through Groves of Myrrh,
> And flow'ring Odors, Cassia, Nard, and Balm;
> A Wilderness of sweets . . . (V.292-4)

In like manner Lewis writes of "the smell of those islands," which, "though faint, was like the sound of running water to a thirsty man" (PER 81). As it wafts across the ocean, the "night breath of a floating island in the star Venus" produces in Ransom a "sharp, sweet, wild, and holy" longing (102-3). One phrase even sounds as if he consciously imitates a few lines from Milton. Compare Perelandra's breezes "laden with ponderous fragrance of night-scented flowers, sticky gums, groves that drop odours, and with cool savour of midnight fruit" (THS 323), with the above and following lines from Milton: "Groves whose rich Trees wept odorous Gums and Balm" (IV.248). In The Pilgrim's Regress, John inhales the fragrance of the Island and feels intense longing (171-2). Likewise, as Lewis's sailor leaves "The Nameless Isle," he savors its

delicious aroma:

> . . . Breathing mildly
> Off the island,--it arched our sail--
> The breeze blew then, blest the fragrance
> Of flower and fruit, floating seaward,
> Land-laden air. I long even now
> To remember more of that sweetness. (NP 126)

And in Dymer, Lewis's longest narrative poem, one can easily see the influences of its author's recent readings in Paradise Lost:

> . . . and across my spirit as I smelt
> The wild thing's scent, a new, sweet wildness ran
> Whispering of Eden-fields long lost by man. (NP 69)

In Lewis's The Great Divorce, fragrances pervade Paradise (75). And finally, in Narnia, pleasant odors waft from the mountaintop garden. In The Magician's Nephew, "a heavenly smell, warm and golden, as if from all the most delicious fruits and flowers of the world, was coming up to them" (156). Perhaps Milton and Lewis believe that, if God thinks fragrances important (see Exodus 29:18, John 12:3-8, and Philippians 4:18), fragrances should appear in works which honor Him.

The charms in Dante's locus amoenus bear mentioning, for Purgatory's earthly paradise influences the gardens of both Milton and Lewis. Reading only forty lines into Canto XXVIII will produce six of the seven charms. Trees appear in the second line, fields in the fifth, fragrance in the sixth, birdsong in 14-18, a rivulet in 25, flowers in 36, and fruit, finally, in line 124. Closer comparison of Dante's individual charms with those of Milton and Lewis will reveal that the Englishmen

owe much to their Italian predecessor.

Even brief examinations of Milton's and Lewis's paradises can lead one to conclude that these men created their settings with the locus amoenus in mind. Their frequent mention of (or allusion to) the myth's appearances in the writings of ancient, medieval, or Renaissance poets reveals their awareness of its importance in literature. Lewis refers to the myth's tradition (Eliot would speak of its "existing monument"), for example, when discussing the walled garden of Guillaume's Roman de la Rose (AoL 74-9, 119-20) and Spenser's use of "pleasant places" (SIL 50-8). He obviously knows--and uses--the locus amoenus as a mythopoeic device. And he writes about how myths manifest, express, or embody themselves in literature and history, so he surely thinks of his own gardens as manifestations of a myth which exists independent of his writings. In spite of the myth's importance in the corpus of Western literature, both writers use the charms because--as Lewis says of Milton--they enjoy a "child-like love of matter" (AoL 264). They have an Eliotic "consciousness of the past," but it never intrudes on their stories or prevents their describing scenes brim-full of sensual pleasures.

Although Milton and Lewis write to please, they also write to teach. Obvious in Paradise Lost, and less evident in Lewis's fiction, is a didactic emphasis on free will. The question which arises in the works is basically this: does God, knowing all that will happen before it actually happens, effectuate His will and limit ours, or does He simply know what we will do with the freedom He gives us?

Arminians (after Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius, 1560-1609) say

that God does not overpower our wills, but simply has foreknowledge of events contingent upon our choice (Berkhof 107). Calvinists (after French theologian John Calvin, 1509-64), on the other hand, claim that God's will controls ours and we are not free. (These explanations are obviously simplistic, but will suffice for our purposes.) Positions along this continuum vary in their emphasis on freedom or determinism.

Until Milton's systematic theology (De Doctrina Christiana) was rediscovered in the 1820's, scholars had to base their understanding of Milton's Arminianism on what he writes in Paradise Lost:

> Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell. (III.100-2)
>
> . . . They themselves decreed
>
> Thir own revolt, not I: if I foreknew,
>
> Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault . . . (III.116-8)

But Maurice Kelley carefully compares the doctrines buried in Paradise Lost with those more clearly stated in Doctrina and summarizes Milton's theology of free will as follows:

> . . . God endowed man with freedom of the will. Man's actions, therefore were independent of divine influence or compulsion; and whether or not Adam stood or fell depended on his own volition, for neither necessity nor the foreknowledge of God dictated Adam's behavior. (77)

Kelley could as well be writing of Arminius as of Milton.

Freedom and prohibition appear mutually exclusive, and the words "forbid" or "obey" make some of us uncomfortable, but within Milton's and Lewis's settings, prohibitions give creatures opportunities to show their love for their Creator through obedience. As in Genesis before

and Perelandra after, Milton's Adam and Eve obey or resist the will of God by their response to one prohibition: they must not eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And this one law limits their freedom, if at all, very little:

> . . . Then let us not think hard
> One easy prohibition, who enjoy
> Free leave so large to all things else, and choice
> Unlimited of manifold delights . . . (IV.432-5)

That one commandment gives God's creatures opportunity to show their love by freely obeying Him (VIII.325). Because, among countless freedoms, it is the "only sign of our obedience" (IV.428), Adam and Eve do not find it burdensome. Milton claims in De Doctrina Christiana that God has put the Forbidden Tree in Eden because

> It was necessary that something should be forbidden or commanded as a test of fidelity, and that an act in its own nature indifferent, in order that man's obedience might be thereby manifested. (Milton 993)

And this obedience is not shown as some sort of negative, oppressive requirement. It is usually, rather, an obedience joyfully rendered as an expression of Love. Christ, the supreme example in Paradise Lost, lives in

> Filial obedience: as a sacrifice
> Glad to be offer'd, He attends the will
> Of His great Father. (III.269-71)

This idea of the joyful sacrifice of obedience, of tested fidelity, passes with the single prohibition from Genesis to Paradise Lost to

Perelandra. The Lady learns from Ransom that

> [Maleldil] made one [prohibition] in order that there might be obedience. In all these other matters what you call obeying Him is but doing what seems good in your own eyes also. Is love content with that? You do them, indeed, because they are His will, but not only because they are His will. Where can you taste the joy of obeying unless He bids you do something for which His bidding is the only reason? (118)

The Lady and the King move freely upon each island, between islands, and, if they choose, to the Fixed Land. But to disobey Maleldil by remaining on the Fixed Land would indicate that they do not trust Him. Such self-assertion would grasp at controlling one's location--something only Maleldil must do. Disobedient self-assertion is (in both Milton's and Lewis's scheme of things) to challenge God, to aspire to become a god. Only Maleldil may determine the waves, the events, the location of an island and its inhabitants. At the end of Perelandra the Lady reflects upon this truth:

> The reason for not yet living on the Fixed Land is now so plain. How could I wish to live there except because it was Fixed? And why should I desire the Fixed except to make sure--to be able on one day to command where I should be the next and what should happen to me?
>
> It was to reject the wave--to draw my hands out of Maleldil's, to say to Him, "Not thus, but thus . . ." (208)

She understands that by obeying Maleldil's one prohibition she expresses her trust in Him, her love for Him.

The evil Weston (who plays Satan's role in the story) tempts the Lady with self-determination when he boasts of earthlings' nautical accomplishments: "They made for themselves Floating Islands greater than yours which they could move at will through the ocean faster than any bird can fly" (120). He tempts her with the ability to control what only Maleldil should control. But Weston has forgotten something: the Lady is content. She has no desire to compete with anyone for the biggest, fastest boat, and she rides her great fish to other islands whenever she desires. "Greater" and "faster" hold no attraction to her, and she loses interest in the conversation. The Green Lady, too, "moves at will"--the will of Maleldil, whom she has found to have her best interests in mind.

Obeying Maleldil proves the Lady and the King content within His will. They cannot know where He will send the floating islands, but that need not imply that Maleldil controls them arbitrarily. Within the context of place, He bestows on them freedom of choice:

> "Out of my own heart I do it."
>
> "I thought," she said, "that I was carried in the will of Him I love, but now I see that I walk with it. I thought that the good things He sent me drew me into them as the waves lift the islands; but now I see that it is I who plunge into them with my own legs and arms, as when we go swimming." (69)

Perelandrians enjoy free will interrupted only slightly by limitations of location--limitations so slight the Lady would not have noticed had not Weston drawn her attention to them.

Although the settings of Paradise Lost and Perelandra both include

one prohibition, those prohibitions appear to differ in kind and purpose. One might assume that, by prohibiting the fruit, God intends to teach His creatures to control their appetites. But Lewis's prohibition borrows more from Milton's than first it seems, for the temptation to eat of the fruit is not a temptation to indulgence, but (like that to stay on the Fixed Land) to self-determination (IX.708, 759). It is, in effect, a temptation to steal from God the power over one's destiny, to aspire to become god-like, which sin was the cause of Satan's downfall.

Another use to which both Milton and Lewis put the locus amoenus myth, in addition to emphasizing mankind's free will, is to point their readers toward Heaven. But there is a difference. Milton says that Eden resembles Heaven, and Lewis says that all such paradises resemble Heaven. The consequence of this difference is that Milton's readers look back with sadness (to a paradise lost), and Lewis's readers look forward with eagerness (to a paradise anticipated). When Satan lands in Eden, it so resembles Heaven that it seems to him "A Heaven on Earth" (IV.208), and he pines for his prelapsarian surroundings. And when Raphael arrives there from Heaven, he sees so much resemblance that he must "confess that here on Earth / God hath dispenst His bounties as in Heav'n" (V.329-30). Adam and Eve are therefore fortunate, for their abode "may compare with Heaven" (V.432). Milton elsewhere calls Eden "the shadow of Heav'n" (V.575) and "another Heav'n" (VII.617). But when they fall, Adam and Eve are sent out of Eden, never to return. Much later, when Christ defeats Satan in Paradise Regained, He "regain[s] lost Paradise" (IV.608). It is not the same place, but "a fairer Paradise . . . for Adam and his chosen Sons" (IV.613-4). This paradise is

never described, and in all of Paradise Regained, only those three words ("a fairer Paradise") give any indication of what the future paradise holds. It remains a vague promise void of the enchanting details that make us yearn for Eden in Paradise Lost.

Lewis, on the other hand, writes of loci amoeni, not to awaken longings for a paradise lost, but to hint of something only an infinite future in Heaven can provide. According to Lewis, "Nature is only the first sketch" of the Paradise awaiting us (WoG 17). Much as we love Nature, much as it arouses sweet emotions and desires, it is only an image. We may enjoy it, but as long as we are in Nature, we stand "on the outside of the [real] world, the wrong side of the door . . . Some day, God willing, we shall get in" (WoG 17). The locus amoenus myth hints at what awaits us on the other side of that door. It is a "faint whisper of the wind from beyond the world" (LAG 430). And he would say, as he has about other myths, that God has sent it to stimulate "desires which no natural happiness will satisfy" (WoG 8):

> If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world . . . earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. (MC 120)

Lewis therefore employs this pagan myth in God's service, hoping thereby to direct his readers toward the Heaven for which they are intended.

> I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main

> object of my life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same. (MC 120)

At the conclusion of The Last Battle one can find perhaps Lewis's most successful attempt at stimulating longings for Heaven. As a unicorn joins the children in running "further up and further in" toward the new Narnia and the Mountains of Aslan, he begins to shout with great excitement. His exclamations sum up what Lewis fully expects to feel upon his own arrival in Heaven:

> "I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now." (171)

4. The Lady: "Gaiety and Gravity Together"

In the fifth chapter of Perelandra, Ransom finally engages the Lady in an uninterrupted conversation, and she becomes more than merely an alien creature discovered on another planet. But Lewis found the chapter extremely difficult to write and, in a letter to a friend, worries that the character may be more than he can handle:

> I may have embarked on the impossible. This woman has got to combine characteristics which the Fall has put poles apart--she's got to be in some ways like a Pagan goddess and in other ways like the Blessed Virgin. (LET 195)

Why "she's got to be" like a goddess and like Mary is unclear unless he feels inclined to imitate Eve, who, within seven lines, Milton compares both to a Pagan goddess and to Mary (V.381-7). Lewis does in fact pattern his Lady after Milton's Eve, and the result, which he calls "gaiety and gravity together" (PER 68), is like no person Ransom has ever met:

> Beautiful, naked, shameless, young--she was obviously a goddess: but then the face, the face so calm that it . . . made her a Madonna. The alert, inner silence which looked out from those eyes overawed him; yet at any moment she might laugh like a child, or run like Artemis or dance like a Maenad. (64)

So, within two sentences, like Eve, the Lady is a pagan goddess, the Blessed Virgin, and a pagan goddess again. In making his Lady like Eve, Lewis reveals both great admiration for and occasional dissatisfaction with Milton's character. But, as Eliot would put it, "modified by the introduction of the new," Milton's Eve lives on in Perelandra's Lady.

When feminist theologian Mary Daly calls Milton's Eve one of many "diarrheic outpourings of misogynism [sic]" (152), she ignores how much he actually improves most seventeenth century (educated male) readers' opinion of the character. Milton represents to Daly the "patriarchal religion" responsible for "the myth of feminine evil" (48-9). In truth, however chauvinistic Milton looks from a twentieth century perspective (as he certainly does), his Eve is less subordinate and more responsible than readers of his time might expect. People cannot easily see whether a very distant object is sitting still, moving away, or moving toward them. So with Milton: from the 1990's, he appears backward, but careful examination shows him actually moving in our direction. If Daly evaluated his Eve relative to the position of women in his time, not ours, she would appreciate the progress Milton actually made.

While employing both pagan and Christian myths in Paradise Lost, Milton strives to dislodge "the myth of feminine evil." He elevates Eve's position relative both to Adam's position and to the then average patriarchal opinions of her. He supports Paul's claim that "the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty" (II Corinthians 11:3) but counters centuries of patriarchal myth by making Eve majestic, intelligent, and sufficient to withstand evil independent of Adam. This chapter examines how Lewis also employs exactly these three important attributes in order that Eve will live on in Perelandra's Lady. Two other considerations--their nudity and the Lady's color--will also be examined for further affinities between Lewis's and Milton's characters.

But first, lest confusion plague the remainder of this study, two different uses of the word "myth" need to be clearly understood. When

Lewis or I writes of pagan myths or Christian myths, we mean archetypal stories (legendary and±or historical) that "reflect something of eternal truth" (Carpenter 43) while evoking timeless, universal emotional responses. When Daly or I writes of the "patriarchal myth" or the "myth of feminine evil," we mean destructive cultural assumptions--about Eve and all women--that chauvinist writers have promulgated. My present chapter discusses, for example, how Milton embellishes the myth (story) of Eve's role in the Fall to combat the patriarchal myth (chauvinism) of feminine evil.

Secondly, before addressing the attributes the two characters have in common, I want to consider why Lewis simply calls his "the Lady." Upon arriving on Perelandra, Ransom encounters a green, human-like, female creature. He is at first surprised to meet a woman, but, upon reflection, realizes that he is "as likely to meet a female as a male" (54). Ransom calls her "woman" only once, for soon he sees her (like a goddess or a queen) surrounded by a retinue of admiring beasts, and she is thereafter "the Lady" (54-6). This label deserves brief exploration.

In normal social situations, people begin conversations by offering and asking for names. Although Ransom's journey to Perelandra results in far from normal situations, we might reasonably expect Ransom and the Lady to exchange names. But his flight through space (naked, in a crystal sarcophagus-like affair) gives him an uneven sunburn, and the Lady dubs him "Piebald Man," or simply "Piebald." Ransom respectfully calls her "my Lady," never asks her name, and only discovers her several names just before returning to Earth (62, 206). Apart from her title and his nickname (which further reinforce their relative hierarchal

positions), they remain essentially nameless throughout the story.

Another nameless Lady appears in a different story--one Lewis had analyzed (for the 1932 Review of English Studies) ten years before writing Perelandra. In "A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle" (better known as "Comus"), Milton simply calls his protagonist "the Lady." The manifold sensual delights with which Comus tempts Milton's Lady obviously appeal to baser desires than those with which Weston attempts Lewis's Lady. In "Comus," furthermore, the Lady protects her virginity in particular more noticeably than her virtue in general (Milton 95, 107-8), while Perelandra's Lady never even mentions sex (33, 59, 87-8). Other links can undoubtedly be drawn to reveal relationships between Lewis's study of "Comus" and his writing of Perelandra, but they shall have to wait for another study. Suffice it to say that, although Lewis found his Lady in Paradise Lost, he very likely found her name in "Comus."

In his Preface to Paradise Lost, Lewis calls Milton's Eve "austere, magnanimous, and lofty, not remiss, nor free and easy, nor florid," someone with whom "critics would be well advised not to take liberties" (118). Her first important attribute is majesty. With suitable respect Adam addresses her: "Fair Consort . . . Daughter of God and Man, accomplisht Eve" (IV.610, 660), titles Lewis deems appropriate to "the Queen of the earth" (PPL 120). Adam's courtesy, "the reality whereof all such courtesies since the Fall have been simulacra" (PPL 120), demonstrates that, in Milton's Great Chain of Being, Eve is Adam's voluntary subject but our Queen. Adam praises "the Virgin Majestie of Eve" (IX.270), and together they "In naked majestie seem'd Lords of all" (IV.290). Sunday School stories of a puerile female Tarzan sound blasphemous in compari-

son to the poet's description of her leaving for a walk in the Garden:

> "With Goddess-like demeanor forth she went;
> Not unattended, for on her as Queen
> A pomp of winning Graces waited . . . (VIII.59-61)

To a nation grateful to have a monarch again, a nation looking back nostalgically to "Good Queen Bess," Milton offers a queenly Eve. And to a society in which only men go to school, Milton secondly offers a learned Eve (IX.532-779). Satan tempts her unsuccessfully with flattery (IX.532-48, 568-70, 605-12), appetites (IX.580-97), and fame (IX.710), for she, like Christ in Paradise Regained, parries with reason and God's Word. In "Adam, Eve, and the Fall in Paradise Lost," Fredson Bowers errs in stating that "Eve's weaker reason falls victim to more powerful passion" (265). Contrary to his readers' expectations, the man--not the woman--falls to passion: "not deceiv'd, / But fondly overcome with Female charm" (IX.998-9), or as Milton puts it in Paradise Regained, "Adam by his Wife's allurement fell" (II.134). Eve yields not to Satan's baser offers, but to libido sciendi, a temptation to exalt herself through the greater wisdom she expects to gain from "This intellectual food" (IX.768). Adam may be her intellectual superior (IX.483), but "nowhere in his poem does Milton suggest that inferiority of intellect predisposes a creature to sin. Thus, that Eve is inferior does not mean that she is incomplete and thereby liable to sin" (Revard 75). Although Adam's inferior, she is not consigned to imbecility--only to somewhat less brilliance. And as he tells Raphael of her attributes, Adam spares no praise in dispelling the myth of a feeble-minded Eve:

> . . . what she wills to do or say,

> Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best;
> All higher knowledge in her presence falls
> Degraded, Wisdom in discourse with her
> Loses discount'nanc't, and like folly shows;
> Authority and Reason on her wait,
> As one intended first, not after made
> Occasionally; and to consummate all,
> Greatness of mind . . . (VIII.549-57)

While Adam speaks to Raphael of Eve, she is out "among her Fruits and Flow'rs" (VIII.44). That Milton sends Eve out alone evidences his third means of combatting the patriarchal myth: he makes Eve sufficient to resist whatever temptations she might encounter. So much confidence has Adam in Eve's resistance that, contrary to chauvinistic practice, he trusts his wife to venture out by herself (VIII.41-61). This first separation scene distracts neither Adam nor Raphael from their conversation, for they "believe in Eve's sufficiency to withstand evil" (Revard 73-4).

Mistakenly adopting the view that Eve is not entirely responsible for her fall, Bowers and Dennis Burden blame Adam for surrendering his role as protector and permitting her to leave his side (Bowers 266-7, 270, Burden 76-96). Bowers, incidentally, pushes his point entirely too far when he says that "she deserts him for Satan" (267). She does not desert him but only leaves him for a short while (IX.248-50, 401) fully expecting not to meet the Enemy (IX.382-4). Both men misunderstand Adam's role in the second separation scene (IX. 205-403) if they expect him to forcibly keep Eve from leaving, for Milton says in "Areopagitica"

that we "esteem not of that obedience, or love, or gift, which is of force" (733). If Eve is to Adam as Adam is to God (IV.299), then Adam, like God, must grant her the freedom to do what she wills. If he allows Eve no choice, he hinders God's gifts of reason and free will. "When God gave [Adam] reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing" (Milton 733). Adam must mirror God's dealings with His creatures when He creates them "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (III.99). God refuses to impose His will on Adam but sends the angel Raphael to warn him lest he abuse his freedom. Likewise, Adam, after they have fallen, reminds Eve,

> I warn'd thee, I admonish'd thee, foretold
> The danger, and the lurking Enemy
> That lay in wait; beyond this had been force,
> And force upon free Will hath here no place. (IX.1171-4)

Just as God mercifully does more than His part by warning His creatures, so Adam does his by warning Eve.

But Eve, echoing Milton in "Areopagitica," who "cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary" (728), asks Adam, "what is Faith, Love, Virtue unassay'd / Alone, without exterior help sustain'd?" (IX.335-6). She knowingly takes responsibility for herself at the second separation scene (IX.378). And, as Diane McColley points out, Eve "is going to misuse her opportunity; but her willingness to face it is not of itself vicious" (119). In the logic Milton must employ to justify God's ways, if Eve is "not sufficient as well as free, God will in effect have inclined the scale toward disobedience" (McColley 104).

Sufficiency and freedom together persuade readers that she could have resisted Satan and is therefore alone responsible for her sin. Revard summarizes the role of sufficiency in the Fall:

> The key to the Miltonic universe is that each creature was made by God so that he might freely and without compulsion choose to serve God. Each and every creature must make that decision, and the very groundwork of that free choice is that nothing in the inherent nature of any creature predisposes him to failure. (77)

To Eve's majesty, intelligence, and sufficiency, Milton adds one more small way of attacking the patriarchal myth of feminine evil--one which, without a Fall, Lewis's Perelandra need not employ. After the Fall, Eve repents first, returns to God, and encourages her spouse to do likewise (XI.914-36). Though extra-biblical, this detail conflicts in no way with scriptural accounts and serves primarily to make his post-lapsarian Eve a more attractive character.

Briefly, another important matter before moving on to Lewis's Lady: Eve's so-called "heroism." In Charlotte Bronte's Shirley, the protagonist praises Eve for having "the daring which could contend with Omnipotence" (256). Bronte concisely summarizes a then popular view. To a post-Blake Romantic, she seems heroic for struggling against insurmountable odds; but Milton's readers would see only sinful pride. Lewis says audiences considered such a fall wicked "until rebellion and pride came, in the [R]omantic age, to be admired for their own sake" (PPL 133). And those who mistake her disobedience for heroic self-assertion merely proclaim their ignorance of Milton's intent.

Perelandra's Lady acts heroically precisely because (like Christian heroes such as Job and Christ) she remains obedient and does not fall. Apart from this major difference, Milton's Eve lives on in that of Lewis, continuing his attack on the patriarchal myth through the Lady's majesty, intelligence, and sufficiency to resist evil.

The Lady's majesty is as impressive as Eve's. In the presence of Milton's majestic Eve, Lewis believes we would feel like "stammering boys, shifting uneasily from one foot to the other, red in the face" (PPL 117). And so awed is Ransom by the Lady that, "with a sense of insecurity," he finds himself unable to look at her face for long (62-3). Later, watching her unobserved, he sees both severity and gentleness. She rules her animals like a kindly queen:

> There was in her face an authority, in her caresses a condescension, which by taking seriously the inferiority of her adorers made them somehow less inferior--raised them from the status of pets to that of slaves. (65)

When Ransom tells her about Earth's Eve, she asks him to greet Eve as would "a queen sending a message to a queen through a commoner" (67). His feeling of standing in the presence of royalty increases until, when she no longer has any questions for him, an awkward incident clarifies her position over him:

> "We have talked enough now," she said at last. At first he thought she was going to turn away and leave him. Then, when she did not move, he bowed and drew back a step or two. She still said nothing and seemed to have forgotten about him. He turned and retraced his way through the deep vegetation

> until they were out of sight of each other. The audience was at an end. (71)

By bringing Ransom into the picture, Lewis has an advantage over Milton: it is more difficult to make Eve queenly when she has no human subjects. Eve can rule over plants and animals, but she is still the lowest of the intelligent creatures yet created. Lewis's Lady obviously rules her plants and animals (54), but she seems even more majestic when she makes Ransom feel so awkward.

The Lady's second attribute, her great intellect, also differs subtly from Eve's. Preface to Paradise Lost voices Lewis's early "discontent with Milton's picture of our first parents" (116), a discontent that diminishes as he grows more aware of why Milton creates them as he does. The articulate, ceremonious characters bother him because "the beauty I expected in Adam and Eve was that of the primitive, the unsophisticated, the naif" (PPL 116). Lewis remedies that dissatisfaction by writing more naivete into Perelandra's Lady. She has more questions, seems more ingenuous than Eve. This guilelessness implies not stupidity but inexperience or ignorance of fallen ways on other planets--and such lack of experience does not imply lack of intelligence. She has the sapience requisite to live on and rule her planet, and wonders why Ransom cannot see what she thinks obvious about Perelandra. And if her questions or her replies to questions seem silly, he learns that she is only "apparently witless" (66). She learns--and is content with--all she needs to know about the universe directly from Maleldil, saying "Maleldil has made me older" (62) or "Maleldil Himself has told me now" (75). But Ransom comes from fallen Earth, and has historical informa-

tion the Lady does not, things she cannot know because her planet is not fallen. And she obviously knows truths that he cannot, for her mind is not yet spoiled by a fall. She does not think it necessary to tell him what she knows (62-3). Compared to her wisdom, he feels he has "no more understanding than a beast" (63), and Ransom finds that she is capable of "doing something with her mind . . . that he [can]not understand" (64). Innocent as she is, she is clearly his intellectual superior.

Just as Eve, though great in mind, is Adam's intellectual inferior (IX.483), so the Lady, when she cannot answer a question, says, "Let us wait and ask the King" (76). But this only happens once. With "tutoring" or "divine revelation" from Maleldil, she engages Ransom and Weston in intellectual discussions. Her wisdom renders impotent any endeavor to tempt her with passions or vanity. She turns from Weston's mirror, as Eve does from her reflection in the water (IV.460-76), and refuses to fall in love either with her own beauty or with the possibility of greatness (136-9). The Lady's mind so impresses Weston that, in the same manner that Satan tempts Eve (IX.724-7), he tries unsuccessfully to arouse in her an inordinate desire for knowledge (112-3), a sort of Faustian <u>libido sciendi</u>. But she knows all that she needs to know and is content with what knowledge Maleldil gives her.

To majesty and intelligence, Lewis adds independent sufficiency to resist evil. He in fact makes his Lady more independent than Eve. The fate of Perelandra evidently awaits her decision (142), not the King's, who appears long after she successfully resists Weston's temptations. The Lady also enjoys a more direct relationship with Maleldil than Eve with God. Eve only knows God through Adam (IV.299), but the Lady learns

directly from Maleldil (61-2, 66, 75). And, though Eve goes to her temptation after withdrawing her hand from Adam's (IX.385-6), the Lady learns that, had she fallen, she would have withdrawn her hand from the hand of Maleldil Himself (208), not from the King's. Most significant in this respect, the Lady remains alone (unless joined by Ransom or Weston) until nearly the end of the book. But, as Robert Brown points out, "Lewis does not suggest that the Green Lady is an easier target for Weston than the King would be were he alone" (55). Although she would like to see the King again, she is in no hurry to do so and seems undisturbed by being alone. The word "alone" carries none of the negative connotations on Perelandra that it does on earth, no sense of incompleteness or lostness or rejection. She asks Ransom, "What is alone?" (65), and echoes the question in Paradise Lost, "What call'st thou solitude?" (VIII.369).

Lewis has kept the Lady alone not only to demonstrate her sufficiency, but also to avoid the mistakes he believes Milton makes by portraying the unfallen sexuality of Adam and Eve. In Preface to Paradise Lost Lewis rehearses Augustine's warning against trying to conjecture about prelapsarian sexuality, then he evaluates Milton's attempts to do just that (123). Trouble begins when Eve shows embarrassment (IV.311, VIII.507-11), and Lewis believes Milton gets himself into a "Catch 22":

> To readers since the Fall such scenes will hardly be pleasing if Eve is represented as having no modesty at all; on the other hand, shame of the body and the body's operations is consequent upon sin and had no place in the time of innocence. (123)

Lewis believes that "Milton treated our first parents with intolerable freedom . . . [and] should not have touched the theme at all. I can conceive of a successful treatment" (124). His "successful treatment" of unfallen sexuality in Perelandra consists of simply keeping the two characters separated long enough to finish the story without having to address their sexual relationship.

But Lewis twice mentions sexuality in Perelandra--both times in reference to the relationship between the Lady and Ransom (59, 87-8). She is not only alone, but also naked, which fact understandably adds complications that Lewis must address.

Nudity has traditionally had four symbolic meanings in the arts:

> . . . nuditas naturalis, the natural state of man conducive to humility; nuditas temporalis, the lack of earthly goods which can be voluntary . . . or necessitated by poverty; nuditas virtualis, a symbol of innocence . . . ; and nuditas criminalis, a sign of lust, vanity and the absence of all virtues. (Panofsky 156)

Milton and Lewis use nuditas virtualis. Being unfallen, the characters are subject neither to criminalis nor to the shame that naturalis's humility seems to imply. Nor can naturalis and temporalis apply to their characters because, firstly, this nudity co-exists with queenly majesty, and secondly, the profusion of material blessings in their respective paradises rules out poverty.

In Paradise Lost Eve ministers naked to Adam and Raphael (V.379-85, 443-50), an unfallen man and an archangel. When the Lady meets Ransom, however, he is a naked, fallen man far from home. But he has no desire

for her, though "she, like himself, was totally naked. Embarrassment and desire were both a thousand miles away" (59). The words that Lewis uses to describe her, "beautiful, shameless, naked, young" (64), ring of Spenser's description of the maidens in the Faerie Queene:

> . . . naked are, that without guile
> Or false dissemblaunce all them plaine may see,
> Simple and true, from couert malice free: (VI.x.24.3-5)

In spite of the Lady's nakedness, Ransom, like Spenser's knight, "daily did apply him selfe to donne / All dewfull seruice, voide of thoughts impure" (VI.x.32.5-6). Ransom may remain void of thoughts impure, but Weston hardly arrives before accusing Ransom of seducing the Lady (87). The idea stains Perelandra's niveous innocence: Ransom and the Lady have more important matters to discuss. Erotic sex seems farther away than his native planet. Trying vainly to explain this to friends upon his return to earth, Ransom can only call it a "trans-sexual" relationship (32-3)--one much more profound than mere physical intimacy can offer. To keep sexuality from intruding on his higher aims, Lewis employs two feelings: strangeness and (for lack of a better term) holy fear.

Some men are physically attracted to women of other races: black, white, brown, or whatever. But a woman of such unearthly green, though not "a source of horror to him" (59-60), would likely not have this effect. Erotic feelings, furthermore, require surroundings familiar enough to neither distract nor threaten. A lawyer from Manhattan, suddenly waking in the wilds of Burundi, would hardly feel sexually aroused by a naked, seven-foot-tall Watusi woman if he expected to be visited at any moment by her (even taller) warrior-husband, a herd of

wildebeests, or an army of fire ants. The journey in space, floating islands, dragon, bubble-trees, and the complete "otherness" of Perelandra must surely produce an even greater effect in Ransom when he meets the Lady. Lust is highly unlikely.

Not only are the Lady and her planet strange to him, but he is at first overwhelmed by "Someone's Presence" that accompanies or surrounds her (72). Until Ransom learns to stop asserting his independence, this Someone (Maleldil) causes him to feel insecure, crushed, unnerved, and generally disoriented (59-72). Again, under such circumstances, lust is highly unlikely.

One final item: there must be some reason for which Lewis has specifically made the Lady such an unusual color. The epic tradition provides a possible source in Purgatorio. When Dante arrives in Earthly Paradise he meets two green ladies. One, "a lady cloaked in green" (Purgatorio XXX.32), turns out to be his beloved Beatrice. But if Lewis borrows the color from Dante, it is more likely from another lady, who, rather than wearing green, is green. Dante encounters "three ladies dancing in a ring," one of which "appeared of emerald through and through / Both flesh and bone" (XXIX.121-5). The ladies, according to Dante scholar Dorothy Sayers, represent Faith (white), Hope (green), and Charity (red)--Pope Urban's Theological Virtues (305). If indeed Lewis owes the idea to Dante, the color may subtly inspire hope that the Lady will successfully resist temptation. If no connection to Dante exists, green still communicates youth, vigor, and calmness--and it emphasizes Lewis's crucial "surprisingness" or "otherness" (OS 16-7).

The Green Lady, then, does what Eve is only theoretically capable

of doing. At the end of Paradise Lost, two sword-bearing cherubim expel Milton's fallen Adam and Eve, who walk "hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow" (XII.648), but Perelandra's last chapter has Lewis's unfallen Adam and Eve, walking hand in hand toward their apotheosis (204). Because Lewis's Lady withstands the test of love and obedience, she and the King become what Eve and Adam cannot. One of the oyeresu explains the event to Ransom:

> "To-day for the first time two creatures of the low worlds, two images of Maleldil that breathe and breed like the beasts, step up that step at which your parents fell, and sit in the throne of what they were meant to be." (197)

Adam and Eve, had they obeyed, could have become angelic (VII.157-9), but The King and the Lady do in fact become "as the eldila" (211).

Paradise Lost is unquestionably the greater work, but Lewis's Lady goes further than Milton's in attacking the patriarchal myth of feminine evil and insufficiency. She is more majestic, less dependent upon her mate, more independently sufficient to resist evil, and more directly in contact with God. Lewis creates an unforgettable character, admirably balancing her innocence and wisdom, grace and severity, playfulness and majesty. Milton's Eve lives on in Perelandra, and one shall be unlikely again to meet her portrayed as enchantingly as in Lewis's Green Lady.

5. The Hero: From Everyman to Saviour

In Lewis's retelling of the Edenic myth, his use of mythology, setting, and the Lady closely parallel those in Paradise Lost. His hero and villain (Ransom and Weston), however, diverge significantly from Milton's. Critics can best understand his reasons for major changes to the villain by comparing those changes to his complaints about Milton's treatment of that role. But Lewis seems to have been disappointed with Milton's hero as well. His fiction also alters the role of the hero, though these alterations are more subtle than those to that of the villain. Whether Lewis changes the hero because of dissatisfaction with Milton's Christ, or merely for practical reasons necessitated by writing twentieth-century novels, each alteration makes Satan more clearly the villain, and Christ, more clearly the hero. Lewis redeems the virtuous and impugns the evil.

"Evil is more fascinating than virtue," complains essayist George Will, explaining America's insatiable appetite for details of Hitler's biography (306). We read, watch, or listen enthralled whenever someone sinks to moral depths which we hardly dare imagine. In Hitler's heyday, this fascination with evil also irritated Lewis, and in Preface to Paradise Lost, he berates people's "disproportionate emphasis on [Dante's] Inferno" at the expense of Purgatorio and Paradiso (63). Possessed of fallen human nature, Dante's readers find his sinners more interesting than his saints. In The Allegory of Love, Lewis finds the unrelieved evil of Deguileville's Hell more faithful to Scripture than the "grandeur, fortitude, even beauty" of Milton's Hell, and Deguileville's vile Satan more biblical than one with "Miltonic loftiness" (270-1). Because

Lewis believes that Milton's Satan is too attractive, with Perelandra, he strives most vigorously to correct the mistake by making Weston a repulsive villain and Ransom an attractive hero.

Lewis says that "in all but a few writers the 'good' characters are the least successful" (PPL 100). Having so observed, he earns a place among those few. Walter Hooper says that Lewis intentionally and successfully makes his good characters more interesting than his bad to the degree that "in Perelandra Lewis reverses Milton's failure: Ransom is far better drawn than Weston" (7). This successful characterization relies heavily on one important ingredient: he is an ordinary person, an "everyman." To the degree that he seems like someone readers can (and would like to) know, they identify with--and grow with--him. But Ransom grows into someone many twentieth-century readers may not recognize: a true Miltonic Christian hero. He then becomes someone most readers will certainly recognize: a saviour, God's emissary enacting Jesus Christ on Peralandra. At and between each significant juncture, Maleldil offers him the free choice of a way out: he need not keep growing through obedience. Through Ransom as everyman, as Christian hero, and as Christ, Lewis strives to improve upon Milton's hero while maintaining Milton's emphasis on obedience and free will.

Although Adam, if anyone, is the epic's main character, he is not its hero. (Milton reserves that role for Christ, who moves from minor to major character in Paradise Regained.) Lewis's initial reaction to Milton's Adam is discontent (PPL 116). He had expected an Adam more primitive, unsophisticated, and naive than someone he calls "the great Father, Priest, and Emperor of the planet Tellus" (PPL 116, 118). Adam

and Eve, in comparison to the creatures round them, are

> Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,
> Godlike erect, with native Honor clad
> In naked Majestie seem'd Lords of all,
> And worthy seem'd, for in thir looks Divine
> The image of thir glorious Maker shone,
> Truth Wisdom, Sanctitude severe and pure,
> Severe, but in true filial freedom plac't;
> Whence true autority in men . . . (IV.288-95)

Lewis does not fault Milton for making unfallen Adam and Eve so lordly. He thinks that readers should feel uneasy in the presence of the parents of us all (PPL 116-7). But in the more than two and a half centuries between Paradise Lost and Perelandra, novels appeared offering heroes whose most salient feature was their verisimilitude. Beowulf has given way to Babbit, and many twentieth-century readers look for a hero they might encounter while shopping in the mall.

To create a hero suitable to the tastes of his audience, Lewis must make Ransom approachable, if not dull. And Lewis's man is indeed ordinary. Before revealing the name of the protagonist early in Out of the Silent Planet, Lewis thrice calls him "the Pedestrian" (7). Since the book begins with the man on a holiday walking tour, the appellation means, of course, "the walker." But the word "pedestrian" has another important meaning not lost upon the author of Studies in Words: as an adjective, it means common, prosaic, even plain. The trilogy therefore opens with an ordinary, foot-weary, round-shouldered, middle-aged scholar seeking a room for the night.

At the beginning of Out of the Silent Planet, C. S. Lewis undercuts the epic's conventions of heroic qualities by offering someone another Lewis (Sinclair) might have created. Epics usually have as protagonists mighty warriors, fearless kings, or men of great strength--heroes immediately recognizable as that about whom the story is written. But this inter-planetary epic commences with its shabby hero worrying that he may not have strength enough to finish his walk (OSP 7). But the trilogy is an epic in the sense that it contains "a theme of eternal relevance, a great action involving the fate of many" (Haigh 187). Out of the Silent Planet concerns the fate of Mars; Perelandra, the fate of Venus; and That Hideous Strength, that of Earth. And at the center of this inter-planetary epic are the hard choices of an ordinary person. And, at the most difficult moment in the epic struggle to protect Perelandra's innocence, he discovers that "the eldila of all worlds, the sinless organisms of everlasting light, were silent in Deep Heaven to see what Elwin Ransom of Cambridge would do" (142). Lewis places cosmic history in the hands of a plain man.

The success or failure of the hero's role in the epic depends upon whether Lewis can balance the ordinariness of the man and the extraordinariness of his adventures. But Lewis has discussed this very problem in an essay on mythopoeics:

> Every good writer knows that the more unusual the scenes and events of his story are, the slighter, the more ordinary, the more typical his persons should be. Hence Gulliver is a commonplace little man and Alice a commonplace little girl. If they had been more remarkable they would have wrecked

> their books. The Ancient Mariner himself is a very ordinary man. To tell how odd things struck odd people is to have an oddity too much: he who is to see strange sights must not himself be strange. He ought to be as nearly as possible Everyman or Anyman. (OS 60)

Given the fantastic nature of Ransom's voyages, readers cannot vicariously participate in them unless he acts and reacts as they might. And readers become less involved each time the protagonist acts more nobly than they know they would in similar circumstances. Lewis allows little distance to accumulate between his audience and his hero; Ransom acts courageously only after slow, gradual growth. Readers grow with him.

But before Lewis makes Ransom an ordinary fellow by having him grow up through various stages of immaturity, he accomplishes this by giving him rather common weaknesses or idiosyncracies. Early in Out of the Silent Planet, Ransom, in addition to being gullible or easily taken in by strangers, is too easily angered. He curses an innkeeper for not renting him a room (7), grows irritated with the sound of his own feet on the road (8), and becomes very angry with the woman for whom he has freely volunteered to do a favor (10). He appears, furthermore, to have too great a fondness for drink. The slowness with which his host opens a bottle of whiskey irritates him (16), and "Ransom's desire for a rest and a drink were rapidly overcoming his social scruples" (14). Such minor flaws, rather than alienating us from the protagonist, make him more believable, more human, and draw us into his adventures:

> His experience of blundering into distances and immensities that have formed no part of his quiet scholar's life

> hitherto is the vehicle within which we enter the narrative. His incredulity and even irritation upon finding himself whisked into these fantastic regions establishes a bridge of credibility between our vantage point and these narratives. The drama anticipates us, as it were, by exclaiming before we have the chance, "Great Scott! This can't be serious!" (Howard 90-1)

We can hardly see ourselves in Adam, Abdiel, or Christ; but Ransom, the "man of straw" (PER 142), is one of us; and when he grows more mature, even heroic, Lewis subtly enables us to believe we could do the same.

Before naively allowing himself to be kidnapped, Ransom encounters Weston and Devine violently struggling to subdue the mentally retarded boy they employ to stoke their furnace. Although middle-aged, Ransom responds like a squeaky-voiced adolescent:

> He would like to have thundered out, "What are you doing to that boy?" but the words that actually came--in rather an unimpressive voice--were, "Here! I say! . . ."
>
> The three combatants fell suddenly apart, the boy blubbering. "May I ask," said the thicker and taller of the two men, "who the devil you may be and what you are doing here?" His voice had all the qualities which Ransom's had so regrettably lacked. (OSP 12)

Far from forceful, Ransom actions are blundering, perplexed, and irrational (10-13). "The last thing Ransom wanted was an adventure, but a conviction that he ought to investigate" (10) sends him stumbling unknowingly into the clutches of evil. Realizing his predicament, he

flees, only to be recaptured "kicking, writhing . . . and bellowing as loud as he could in the faint hope of rescue" (20). Readers have at this point more reason to expect childish behavior than epic-heroic. But Ransom regresses even further back to earlier stages of immaturity.

Epics of centuries past generally start with mature protagonists, fully developed and ready for quest, test, or battle; but novels, until just recently, have focused primarily on character development. Before Ransom develops, he experiences, during his captive journey to Malacandra, a death and a second gestation, birth, infancy, childhood, and adolescence. He has had his earthly career as a philologist, but he must be "born again" into a new role as an inter-planetary emissary.

In order to kidnap Ransom for their journey to Mars, Weston and Devine (two evil scientists) knock him unconscious, bind him, and drag him corpse-like into their steel space ship. But this "death" brings new life: throughout the flight, space, like a mother, nutures him. And like a fetus nourished by its mother as it swims in amniotic fluid, the naked Ransom felt a "sweet influence pouring . . . into his surrendered body" from the "empyrean ocean of radiance in which they swam" (31-2). After his "rebirth" on Mars, he shows less fear for he has gained new strength during his "second gestation" in space.

Twentieth-century science usually describes space as a sterile vacuum devoid of matter and life. But Ransom's extra-terrestrial womb nourishes him with replenishing life and effulgent light:

> He wondered how he could ever have thought of planets, even of the Earth, as islands of life and reality floating in a deadly void. Now, with a certainty which never after deserted

> him, he saw the planets--the "earths" he called them in his thought--as mere holes or gaps in the living heaven . . . formed not by addition to, but by subtraction from, the surrounding brightness. (OSP 40)

Likewise, in Perelandra, Ransom "had been in 'space' and found it Heaven, tingling with a fulness of life" (164). This life and light and energy emanate from Maleldil's (God's) goodness, which fills every place from which He has not consciously withdrawn it (WoG 26). God's saturation of space is hardly original with Lewis: it appears in, among other places, the Bible and the works of Milton and Dante. Ransom quotes Psalm 19:1 when he observes "the heavens which declare the glory [of God]" (OSP 32). God asks His people in the Bible, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" (Jeremiah 23:24). And Milton's God says, "I am who fill / Infinitude, nor vacuous the space" (VII.167-8). Lewis probably got his "womb of worlds" (OSP 32) from another of Milton's lines, "Space may produce new Worlds" (I.650), a line which he carefully analyzes in Studies in Words (255). His emphasis (in Out of the Silent Planet) on the lights of the heavens clearly resembles Beatrice's words to Dante in Canto XXX of Il Paradiso:

> We have won beyond the worlds, and move
> Within that heaven which is pure light alone:
> Pure intellectual light, fulfilled with love,
> Love of the true Good, filled with all delight,
> Transcending sweet delight, all sweets above. (lines 38-42)

This light and love, this presence of God, nourishes Ransom's second gestation, preparing him for his growth on Malacandra from birth through

infancy and childhood to adolescence and manhood.

After his head and shoulders emerge from the manhole at the bottom of the spherical space ship (only a midwife is lacking), the imagery begins to characterize Ransom as an infant. He can see "nothing but colours . . . a water-colour world out of a child's paint-box" (42). In the chaotic terror his captors feel when they encounter some of Malacandra's huge inhabitants, he has a chance to flee and runs stumbling away in "an infantile complex of fears" (47). Many hours later, he huddles exhausted beside a warm stream and whimpers in "a flood of self-pity. He drew his knees up and hugged himself" (50). Desperately lonely and talking to himself, he thinks of warm bedrooms and nurseries back on Earth until he falls asleep, still curled in a fetal position.

As Ransom continues to grow from infancy into childhood, he sets out the following day and meets a "hross," one of the planet's three intelligent species. Curiosity supersedes his fear, and he attempts communication. His training in philology eventually enables him to learn to baby-talk in Old Solar (the language of all unfallen rational beings in the Solar System), and the hross invites him to its fishing village. Just when readers begin to admire his progress, Ransom gets sea-sick in the boat and feels once again "the shame of being sick at a children's party" (62). Upon his arrival, the hrossa treat him kindly, and he soon shares with them a surprising degree of trust and affection. From the hrossa he learns about the eldila which populate the solar system. Because he comes from fallen, silent Thulcandra (Earth), he cannot see an eldil as the unfallen hrossa can. He is too young in the ways of Maleldil, but as he grows older, he will see and understand more.

Ransom's greatest growth takes place in an incident while hunting with the hrossa warriors. He discovers within himself some long-lost fund of courage, and goes looking for the ferocious "hnakra." An eldil interrupts the hunt and commands Ransom to go appear before Oyarsa, the archangel who rules Malacandra; but Ransom delays his departure long enough to take part in the kill. In the brief triumph that follows the successful hunt, Ransom believes that he has matured (OSP 81).

But just when Ransom believes that he has grown up, he fails most seriously, and in so doing, learns about true Christian heroism. Like many adolescents back on fallen Thulcandra, the newly arrived Ransom thinks of hunting as a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. On unfallen Malacandra, however, this is clearly not the case. Hrossa hunt the hnakra only because it endangers the lives of everyone in their village--not because they delight in hunting per se. The adolescent Ransom, on the other hand, thinks that violence will usher him into manhood. But the author, like Milton in Paradise Lost IX.27-41, teaches that violence is itself not admirable--it should only, as a last resort, be employed in the service of some higher purpose. Hrossa use force to protect their village and, in Perelandra's gruesome combat, force is necessary to protect the planet from Satan's emissary. When Maleldil sends an eldil to take Ransom away from the hunt, He wants Ransom to learn that obedience--not violence--makes him a man.

In the excitement of the hunt, in his eagerness to "hold on to his new-found manhood," Ransom stays too long, leaving only after they have slain the hnakra (OSP 80). By delaying his departure, Ransom disobeys the eldil, and his mistake costs the life of a hross. Having finally

caught up with Ransom just as he and his fellow hunters celebrate the success of the hunt, the evil Weston and Devine kill the hross with a bullet intended for Ransom. The celebration changes quickly to mourning, and the surviving hross tells Ransom that "all this has come from not obeying the eldil" (83). At precisely the moment Ransom does something traditionally thought heroic--killing a dangerous beast--he learns a severe lesson in the difference between false and true heroism. Numb with guilt and grief, Ransom asks them to punish him with death. But Malacandrians do not kill rational beings: "Only Oyarsa does that" (82). They insist that he immediately set off to see Oyarsa. Ransom can do nothing to redress his failure, so, obeying their instructions, he sets out to find Oyarsa. On the way, he firmly resolves

> henceforward to obey the hrossa or eldila. His efforts to rely on his own judgement in Malacandra had so far ended tragically enough. He made a strong resolution, defying in advance all changes of mood, that he would faithfully carry out the journey to [Oyarsa] if it could be done. (OSP 85)

When he finally appears before Oyarsa, Ransom presents himself ready to do whatever it wills (122). From this point on in Lewis's trilogy, Ransom is a Christian hero, for he has learned an unforgettable lesson in obedience. He never again takes lightly the commands of Maleldil or any of His agents.

Lewis's Christian hero is Miltonic in its emphasis on obedience as the best, bravest thing a Christian can do. And Ransom's just-quoted resolution to become one virtually paraphrases Adam's similar resolution at the end of Paradise Lost:

> Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,
> And love with fear the only God, to walk
> As in His presence, ever to observe
> His providence, and on Him sole depend,
> Merciful over all His works, with good
> Still overcoming evil, and by small
> Accomplishing great things, by things deem'd weak
> Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise
> By simply meek; that suffering for Truth's sake
> Is fortitude to highest victory,
> And to the faithful Death the Gate of Life;
> Taught this by His example Whom I now
> Acknowledge my Redeemer ever blest. (XII.561-73)

The soliloquy, often called Milton's definition of a Christian hero (Wickenheiser 8), foreshadows the character of Christ, "the second Adam," in Paradise Regained.

Milton's Christian hero deserves more attention, for not until Ransom becomes one will he be prepared for his next, most important role as saviour of Perelandra. The primary ingredient of Christian heroism in Paradise Lost is obedience, and, beginning in the first line, Milton refers to it (excluding its synonyms) at least sixty times in the epic (Ingram & Swaim 128-9, 391). And when, in Books XI and XII, Michael reveals to Adam visions of the future, Milton writes faithful obedience into each of the lonely just men, the Christian heroes such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Christ.

Milton has much to say about true and false heroism. Several times

he derides as misled those epics which praise the "great Conquerors," or "Destroyers rightlier call'd and Plagues of men," who

> . . . overcome in Battle, and subdue
> Nations, and bring home spoils with infinite
> Man-slaughter . . . (XI.691-7)

He complains that "the better fortitude / Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom / [Remains] Unsung," and that "what most merits fame [remains] in silence hid" (IX.31-3, XI.699). Traditional epics have glorified great warriors, but Milton portrays violence as foolishness to be avoided if possible, and deeds of peace and goodness as acts of true heroism. In Paradise Lost, the elements of real heroism include, in part, obedience (III.269), faithfulness (V.596-7), meekness or humility (III.266), and a willingness to suffer for good (III.245). And each of these can, of course, be found in Milton's ultimate Christian hero, Christ Himself.

Based upon Satan's temptation of Christ in Luke 4:1-13, the sequel to Paradise Lost tells how Paradise, "By one man's disobedience lost" is recovered "to all mankind, / By one man's firm obedience" (I.2-4, cf. Romans 5:19). Milton calls Christ's declension of Satan's temptations a "deed / Above Heroic, though in secret done" (I.14-5). Paradise Lost sets up a need (the salvation of mankind), defines what sort of person must meet that need (the Christian hero), and predicts that Christ will be that person. But not until Paradise Regained does the poet reveal how or why Christ is uniquely qualified to meet that need. He alone can save mankind because only He, by resisting temptation, is perfect enough to atone for them through His death, the substitutionary punishment for their failure to obey God's commands. Christ, the son

of God, becomes the ultimate Christian hero when, "as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death" (Philippians 2:8).

Milton embellishes the old biblical stories of Christian heroes and Saviour of our planet, but Lewis invents a new hero-saviour for Venus. Having matured and learned obedience on Malacandra, Ransom learns that Maleldil wants him on Perelandra. When the narrator asks him if he has been ordered there by an eldil or Oyarsa, he replies that "the order comes from much higher up" (23), from Maleldil Himself.

Ransom humbly realizes that it appears megalomaniacal for "a tall, white, shivering, weary scarecrow of a man" (29) to claim to be chosen specially by God, and he anticipates the narrator's response:

> You are feeling the absurdity of it. Dr. Elwin Ransom setting out single-handed to combat powers and principalities. . . . that is what I have been feeling myself ever since that thing was sprung on me. But when you think of it, is it odder than what all of us have to do every day? When the Bible used that very expression about fighting with principalities and powers and depraved hypersomatic beings at great heights . . . it meant that quite ordinary people were to do the fighting. (23-4)

Employing some changes in wording (Lewis could read the original Greek), Ransom refers to Ephesians 6:12, which reads in the King James, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." And in spite of his voyage to Malacandra, Ransom still humbly thinks himself an ordinary Christian--just

someone who has learned the importance of obeying whatever God desires of him. Now he feels sure that God wants him to participate in the next "phase of the cosmic war" (24). He takes very seriously the apostle's description of a war others do not seem to notice:

> He [Ransom] described us as being in a state of seige, as being, in fact, an enemy-occupied territory, held down by eldils who were at war both with us and with the eldils of "Deep Heaven," or "space." Like the bacteria on the microscopic level, so these co-inhabiting pests on the macroscopic permeate our whole life invisibly and are the real explanation of that fatal bent which is the main lesson of history. (12)

Lewis believes theologically what he writes into his fiction: that God and Satan are at war in the universe. Because his readers are getting progressively less familiar with the Bible, he remarks in a letter that "any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people's minds under cover of romance without their knowing it" (LET 167). And much of what Lewis buries in his fiction appears in his most explicitly theological book, Mere Christianity, where he writes,

> Christianity agrees with Dualism that this universe is at war. But [unlike Dualism] it does not think this is a war between independent powers. It thinks it is a civil war, a rebellion, and that we are living in a part of the universe occupied by the rebel.
>
> Enemy-occupied territory--that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling

> us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage. (50-1)

In Perelandra, however, Ransom takes part in a great campaign of containment--preventing the Enemy from occupying any more territory than he already does. Satan, who has been confined to Earth for his crimes against Maleldil, "is meditating some sort of attack on Perelandra" (23). He sends his representative, Weston, to tempt Perelandra's Lady; Maleldil sends Ransom to support her.

Ransom the Christian hero obeys, even though he hardly knows what he is to do. Ransom's "reason accept[s] the view" that he represents and is cared for by Maleldil, but his nerves and imagination and natural skepticism respond so differently that he "feel[s] in a panic" (27). Maleldil miraculously delivers him to the scene of conflict, but doubts still plague him about whether he is truly so crucial to the cosmos:

> It seemed Blasphemous. "Anyway, what can I do?" babbled the voluble self . . . He tried to persuade himself that he, Ransom, could not possibly be Maleldil's representative as the Un-man was the representative of Hell. The suggestion was, he argued, itself diabolical--a temptation to fatuous pride, to megalomania. (141)

Fear both of conflict and of pride creates in him the meekness requisite to humbly trust in Maleldil for guidance and strength. He knows that little will be accomplished on Perelandra if he tries to work wonders in his own strength.

This is, in essence, the major lesson that every Christian hero must learn. Epic heroes perform great (often violent) deeds in their own strength, but the Christian heroes of Milton and Lewis simply obey

God and trust that He will do (perhaps through them) what must be done. Ransom obeys and trusts. He has learned Old Solar, but he has no idea what to say or do upon his arrival on Perelandra (25-6). He trusts that his orders come from Someone who will later provide him with the right words or actions. So Ransom goes as went the twelve disciples when Christ sent them around Israel as His representatives:

> Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves . . . [for] I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. . . . take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. (Matthew 10:9-20)

The disciples each took only one coat--Ransom must go naked. And not only has he no idea what to say or do, he knows nothing about what to expect upon his arrival on Perelandra. Astronomers can see the surface of Mars through a telescope, but thick layers of swirling clouds obscure Venus. Nevertheless, like Milton's Abraham, whom God orders to leave Chaldaea, "he straight obeys, / Not knowing to what Land, yet firm believes . . . with what Faith / He leaves his Gods, his Friends, and native Soil" (XII.126-9). Ransom faithfully obeys, even though he knows he "might not come back" (28). In preparation for his mission on Perelandra, Ransom demonstrates the necessary attributes of a true Christian hero. He is obedient, faithful, humble, and willing to suffer--even die--for Maleldil.

Ransom, in fact, has become so capable a Christian hero that he is ready to be Perelandra's saviour by playing the ultimate Christian hero: Christ. According to Lewis critic Chad Walsh, Perelandra's hero "truly earns the name of Ransom, as he enacts the role of a kind of saviour, a little Christ, in rescuing that virgin planet from the downfall that Tellus [Earth] suffered" (71). Lewis knows that Christian readers will not miss Ransom's resemblances to Christ, but he very much wants them to know how Ransom enacts Christ's role. In Perelandra's preface he therefore says, "All the human characters in this book are purely fictitious and none of them is allegorical" (6). With the first half of this statement he saves his readers the trouble of writing for Ransom's address. With the second, however, Lewis moves to literary terminology: he wants them to understand that, although Ransom plays the role of Christ in the story, this does not make Ransom an allegory of Christ. If this distinction is so important to Lewis, then a brief look into it will yield a better understanding of Ransom as Christ.

Allegories played an important role in Lewis's literary experience. He studied so many allegories (in Latin, Italian, French, German, Old English, and English) that he wrote his first account of his conversion to Christianity in an allegory imitating Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (Griffin 86-8). When Pilgrim's Regress (1933) received good reviews but failed to reach as wide an audience as he had hoped, he realized the allegory's limitations for modern readers of popular literature. In The Allegory of Love (1936), he writes,

> Nothing is easier or more vulgar than to make allegories, if we are content with purely conceptual equivalences and do not

> care whether the product will satisfy imaginations as well.
>
> But when they are made they are monstrosities . . . (268-9)

Two long chapters in that book examine the history and definitions of allegory, contrasting it to symbolism and mythology, which he thinks require more skill or imagination.

Lewis fears that readers will misunderstand Ransom and Weston, assuming that they allegorically represent Christ and Satan. As Bunyan does in his allegory, Lewis has in Pilgrim's Regress characters and places with clearly allegorical functions: the Landlord represents God, the Island represents Heaven, Mr. Mammon personifies greed, and so on. But by the publication of Out of the Silent Planet and Perelandra ten years later, Lewis has grown less fond of allegory and turns instead to symbolism and what he calls "supposition":

> Suppose, even now, in some other planet there were a first couple undergoing the same that Adam and Eve underwent here, but successfully.
>
> Allegory and such supposals differ because they mix the real and the unreal in different ways. Bunyan's picture of Giant Despair does not start from supposal at all. It is not a supposition but a fact that despair can capture and imprison a human soul. What is unreal (fictional) is the giant, the castle, and the dungeon. The Incarnation of Christ in another world is mere supposal; but granted the supposition, He would really have been a physical object in that world as He was in Palestine . . . (LET 283, original emphasis)

Ransom, therefore, does not represent Christ the Saviour in Perelandra.

He is a physical object, the saviour of that planet, in the same way that Christ is the saviour of this one. And God (Maleldil) does not send His Son to Perelandra incarnated as the Englishman Elwin Ransom in the same way that He sends His Son to Earth incarnated as a Hebrew man named Y'shua ("Jesus"). Rather, a Christian man simply goes to another planet and does as he is told. Lewis explains:

> Ransom (to some extent) plays the role of Christ not because he allegorically represents Him (as Cupid represents falling in love) but because in reality every real Christian is really called upon in some measure to enact Christ. Of course Ransom does this rather more spectacularly than most. But that does not mean that he does it allegorically. It only means that fiction . . . chooses extreme cases. (LET 283, original emphasis)

Lewis makes the same point about Aslan in Narnia: Aslan does not allegorically represent Christ. Granted the supposition of Narnia, Aslan is simply the sort of saviour Narnia requires (LET 283). And Perelandra requires Ransom. The planet's situation differs enough from Earth's that God does not ask Christ to suffer there what He has suffered once before. "The new world of Perelandra was not a mere repetition of the old world Tellus. Maleldil never repeated Himself" (PER 144). Nevertheless, even though Ransom varies significantly from Earth's saviour, examination of the similarities clearly reveals how he enacts the role of Christ.

Ransom, like Y'shua in Israel, has nothing extraordinary about his history or appearance to set him apart as chosen by God for a mission

of cosmic significance. And as Christ grows up a devoutly religious Jew (Luke 2:41-52), so Ransom begins his adventures, in spite of his idiosyncratic weaknesses, a dutifully honest man (OSP 9, 11) who daily prays to God (OSP 47, 51). He apparently knows the Bible, for it comes readily to mind (OSP 32, PER 24, 146). He even wonders if perhaps he should attempt some sort of missionary endeavour among the Malacandrians (OSP 68). But Ransom learns that their god (Maleldil) is God, that Malacandrians serve Him devoutly, and that, although God has chosen to use Christianity to reveal Himself to planet Earth, His revelations to Mars and Venus differ according to the needs of those planets.

Venus "gives birth" to Ransom in no less miraculous a way than that in which Christ appears on Earth, for the saviour in Perelandra is supernaturally deposited into her "amniotic" oceans. In the Bible (Philippians 2:6-8) and in Paradise Lost (III.237), the Son of God is fully mature in Heaven before voluntarily humbling Himself to become a fetus, infant, and child.

In the course of becoming Perelandra's saviour, Ransom, the aging philologist, takes a route which roughly parallel's Christ's road to the crucifixion and resurrection. Although Ransom has grown mature--even heroic--by dint of his adventure to Malacandra, going to Perelandra takes him through yet another death, gestation, birth, infancy, childhood, and adolescence. When the coffin-like, supernaturally-motivated craft lands in the planet's warm waters, it dissolves and Ransom awakes to swim naked in Venus's amniotic-like waters. Far from struggling to avoid drowning, he marvels to find himself "enjoying such tepid revelry in water--such glorious bathing . . . the tenderness, the muted irides-

cence, of that warm, maternal, delicately gorgeous world" (36, emphasis mine). When he finally crawls onto a floating island, he has difficulty walking on the constantly moving surface and, like a toddler, must spend hours "teaching himself to walk" (41). With its rich variety of fruits and drinks, Venus, the female planet, nourishes the visiting earthling, who "lay on his belly to drink" from a mound of "sea that was higher than the shore" (50)--as though nursing at a breast. And falling upon the soft ground "dissolved him into weak laughter. He rolled to and fro on the soft fragrant surface in a real schoolboy fit of the giggles" (40). And much later, after his exhausting battle with Weston, Ransom sleeps under and eats from a fruit tree in some sort of "second infancy, in which he was breast-fed by the planet Venus herself" (185).

Although Venus feeds Ransom throughout his stay, he spends less time in childhood there than on Malacandra. When he first sees a Perelandrian, he approaches her with the confidence of an adult equal. He has learned Old Solar, and they immediately communicate intelligently. But, like Christ, who was tempted before his mission on earth began, Ransom must also pass a test. Matthew 4:1-11 describes Christ's three temptations in the wilderness, and His triumph over those temptations becomes the subject of Paradise Regained. Before meeting the Lady and beginning his epic struggle with the Un-man (Weston's demon-possessed body), Ransom also resists three temptations: to eat another gourd (42), to burst more bubbles on the "bubble tree" (48), and to eat only the tasty, red-centered berries (49-50). He initially resists with the aid of his conscience, which grows increasingly sensitive to sin. Before long, however, just as Christ communicated with the Father, Ransom hears

directly from "the Voice out of the night" (146), from Maleldil.

Ransom then grows physically and spiritually healthier by eating Perelandra's nourishing provisions and learning from Maleldil and the Green Lady. Soon he is ready to meet Weston. Like Christ, who preached to and reasoned with the Jews for years before finally suffering, Ransom talks and argues with Weston for a long time before finally admitting that his peaceful means have been exhausted. Ransom stays up much of the night before the battle, arguing with the Voice. Like Moses arguing that he is not qualified to speak to Pharaoh (Exodus 3-4), "Ransom, with his ridiculous piebald body and his ten times defeated arguments," complains to the Voice, "what can I do? I've done all I can. I've talked till I'm sick of it. It's no good, I tell you" (141). He wants to flee what he fears and detests: a physical fight with the hideous Un-man. An intellectual trained to argue, Ransom thinks that "the notion of physical combat was only fit for a savage" (141). But his model, Christ (the "Prince of Peace"), had been willing to take up a whip and drive the money-changers out of the temple (John 2:13-6). Ransom finally realizes that Weston's body "was the Enemy's only foothold in Perelandra," and further, that "Weston's body could be destroyed . . . On the physical plane it was one middle-aged, sedentary body against another, and both unarmed save for fists and teeth and nails" (146). He loathes the idea, and feels certain he will be killed: "'When,' he asked, 'did I ever win a fight in all my life?'" (146). For a minute he considers refusing to fight. He hopes Maleldil will understand his fear and forgive him, just as Peter was forgiven for betraying Christ (147).

Through Ransom's fear, Lewis makes the hero--in spite of his being

a saviour--an ordinary man terrified of pain and death. Lewis's heroes are in fact seldom brave; like us, they regard danger with trembling. But Lewis sends them into danger anyway, and we admire these characters more for obeying in spite of feeling frightened. In Narnia, "Peter did not feel very brave; indeed, he felt he was going to be sick. But that made no difference to what he had to do. He rushed straight up to the monster . . ." (LWW 127). Lewis understood that Ransom's terror would make us identify with him, for he tells how Christ's fear in Gethsemane draws us unto Him:

> I don't see how any degree of faith can exclude the dismay, since Christ's faith did not save Him from dismay in Gethsemane. We are not necessarily doubting that God will do best for us; we are wondering how painful the best will turn out to be . . . You needn't worry about not feeling brave. Our Lord didn't--see the scene in Gethsemane. How thankful I am that when God became man He did not choose to become a man of iron nerves; that would not have helped weaklings like you and me nearly so much. (LET 250, 285)

Ransom, too, learns from the One who trembled in Gethsemane. The Voice says to him, "It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom . . . My name is also Ransom" (147-8). Then he realizes that he is speaking to "the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all" (I Timothy 2:5-6). Reenacting Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, Ransom groans, "Mercy, Lord, why me?" (149), and surrenders his will to God. The moment he decides to do what Perelandra requires, a great burden is lifted from him. Free will and obedience seem to intermingle, for in

deciding to obey, he feels "delivered . . . into unassailable freedom" (149) and senses strength and encouragement. When Christ adds to His prayers the words, "nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42), God grants Him the strength requisite for the suffering ahead. Lewis compares this to "giving the lamb a coat proportional to the wind" (LET 219). Ransom has learned to trust and obey to the point that he is prepared to suffer or fight as Perelandra's ultimate Christian hero.

The ensuing physical battle for Perelandra begins like Milton's war in Heaven. After arguing with Satan, Abdiel sees that mere words will not remove the Enemy, and he strikes him with so swift and strong a blow that Satan falls back ten paces to his knees (VI.189-94). Ransom, too, strikes the Un-man, who "fall[s] back about six paces" (152-3). For thirty-odd pages, the struggle continues on land, on sea, underwater, and underground. "The sheer physical grossness, described in agonizing detail," reminds Thomas Howard of Jesus Christ's crucifixion: "the same fight [on Earth] got down to nails, splinters, thorns, blood" (113-4). Bettie Jo Knight thinks that Ransom's underwater/underground pursuit and battle with the Un-man more than coincidentally resemble "Beowulf's pursuit of Grendel's mother to the underlake lair where he fought to the death of the monster" (115). Ransom's journey and struggle in the underworld recall similar events in several older myths and epics, particularly Christ's descent into Hell.

Milton often ridicules the traditional subjects of epics: battles and fierce physical struggles (IX:25-41, XI:689-99, 789-90). More impressed with deeds of peace, he makes the war in Heaven just one of many events leading up to the <u>real</u> climax: Satan's temptation of Eve. So,

although the violence in Heaven begins spectacularly with Abdiel's violent blow, Milton ends it relatively quickly, without much detail--Satan and his legions jump out of Heaven into Hell to avoid facing Christ (VI.862-6). If Paradise Lost were a more traditional epic, one would expect a climax with Satan and Christ battling to the death. But when they meet again in Paradise Regained, their battle is one of words.

Lewis's account of the battle for Perelandra contains lengthy, detailed descriptions of bloody tooth-and-nail violence. Milton and Lewis both loathe physical combat; but, when it serves God's high purposes, Lewis virtually celebrates it. In spite of pain and exhaustion, Ransom learns the joy of holy hatred:

> . . . an experience that perhaps no good man can ever have in our world came over him--a torrent of perfectly unmixed and lawful hatred. The energy of hating, never before felt without some guilt, rose into his arms and legs till he felt that they were pillars of burning blood. What was before him appeared no longer a creature of corrupted will. It was corruption itself . . . It is perhaps difficult to understand why this filled Ransom not with horror but with a kind of joy. The joy came from finding at last what hatred was made for. (155-6)

In spite of his hatred for "corruption itself," Ransom exhibits kindness to the end. When Weston tries to break free of the demonic Un-man possessing him, Ransom prays for him, offers him aid, and advises him to turn to God (130, 171). And like Christ, who forgave those who crucified Him, Ransom cares for his enemy.

But the diabolical Un-man overpowers Weston, and Ransom must kill them both for Perelandra's sake. At one point in the struggle, the Un-man holds Ransom underwater so long that he believes he is drowning and gives up hope. At the last instant, he surfaces, gasping for air. In Christ's death and resurrection were His moments of greatest victory over Satan, for "through death He . . . destroy[ed] him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). Similarly, when Ransom emerges resurrected from the dark waters, he finds sufficient strength finally to crush the Un-man's head with a rock. Before leaving the scene, he pushes the corpse over a cliff into a volcanic lake of fire, as "the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:10). Before dying, the Un-man wounds Ransom's heel--no accident, for the same can be found in Milton:

> . . . this act
> Shall bruise the head of Satan, crush his strength
> Defeating Sin and Death, his two main arms,
> And fix far deeper in his head thir stings
> Than temporal death shall bruise the Victor's heel . . .
> (XII.429-33)

Milton's account, of course, echoes Genesis 3:15, wherein God declares that Eve's descendant (Christ) will bruise the serpent's head and the serpent will strike Christ's heel. Ransom's heel continues to bleed after he returns to Earth (30) and does not mend even in the last book of the trilogy (THS 143). Were Ransom an allegorical Christ, his wound, like Christ's wounds, would heal completely.

Like Christ emerging from the tomb, Ransom leaves the underworld

through a cave. After a fortnight's healing rest from battle, Ransom ascends "the great mountain" (PER 190–2). Instead of choosing "climb," " rise," "go up," "mount," "scale," or "aspire," Lewis repeatedly echoes the Biblical "ascend," which the Gospels use of Christ's departure to Heaven. Before Ransom leaves Perelandra, he witnesses the great pageant celebrating Eve's defeat of evil. Again, were Ransom an allegorical Christ, he would be, like Christ, transfigured on the Mount. The Oyarsa of Malacandra, who has joined them for the celebration, helps Ransom understand his role in the story:

> "Be comforted," said Malacandra. "It is no doing of yours. You are not great, though you could have prevented a thing so great that Deep Heaven sees it with amazement. Be comforted, small one, in your smallness. He lays no merit on you. Receive and be glad." (197)

Ransom is not great, but his trust and obedience have enabled him to be "of Maleldil's instruments in this . . . the chief" (208). Because an ordinary, middle-aged, sedentary man from Cambridge obeys God, he saves a planet from sin and death.

Lewis's story, though sharing Milton's emphasis on obedience, also shares the poet's emphasis on free will. Throughout the trilogy, Ransom can do as he pleases. Weston and Devine kidnap him early in the first book, but his kidnapping is, given the bizarre circumstances, a natural (though unusual) result of trespassing on the property of an evil scientist. Success on Malacandra depends upon his freely deciding to trust and obey the hrossa, sorns, eldila, and Oyarsa--beings who manifest the Divine will. In the second book, Ransom claims to have been "ordered"

(23), "selected" (24), and "sent" (24) to perform a mission of cosmic importance, but he remains always free to decline or disobey at any moment. One never senses that a refusal would be evil--only that Ransom would miss out on great events and blessings: "He had long known that great issues hung on his choice; [but] he now realised the true width of the frightful freedom that was being put into his hands" (148). He often confronts decisions, and like John in The Pilgrim's Regress, finds "The choice of ways so small, the event so great" (182).

If Milton's Adam and Eve choose to obey, they become like angels (VII.157). Ransom chooses to serve Maleldil and therefore becomes, though not angelic, something certainly more than merely human. When the King and Lady appear at the final pageant, the Oyeresu (archangels) of Perelandra and Malacandra kneel before them (204). Then, just before Ransom returns to his native Thulcandra, the King kneels before him and washes his feet, ceremonially demonstrating Ransom's new importance in the inter-planetary hierarchy. Had Ransom been an allegorical Christ, he would have washed the feet of someone he was sent to serve or save.

In the final book of the trilogy, Ransom appears as "the Director," leader of a small band of Christians who try to destroy "that hideous strength," the evil work of power-hungry scientists. He reminds people of a king on a throne (THS 142-3); he appears ageless (143); he controls and communicates with animals (164); the revived Merlin bows in servitude to him (274); and the Oyeresu of Deep Heaven come whenever he calls (317-27). Finally, when Ransom's task on Earth is completed, Maleldil takes him up into Heaven in the same way that Enoch, Melchisedec, Moses, Elijah, Christ, and King Arthur were taken (THS 195, 274, 368, 379). In

Lewis's account of Ransom's "death," many myths become one.

When ancient myths reappear in twentieth-century novels, they need heroes more realistic than those of older epics. In Ransom, Lewis meets this need with an ordinary man. But this man encounters extraordinary adventures, each of which offers him opportunities to choose between God's will and his own. Because this ordinary man chooses to trust and obey God, he gradually grows into a true Christian hero and an imitation of Christ on Perelandra. As T. S. Eliot would describe it, Milton's Christian hero and Milton's Christ are "ever so slightly altered" by Lewis's supervention of this new Christian hero, this new Christ (5).

6. The Villain: Weston and the Myth of an Heroic Satan

Asked in an interview whether he really believed in the existence of devils, C. S. Lewis replied that they do not appear in ancient doctrinal creeds, and that he thinks it "possible to be a Christian without believing in them. I do believe such beings exist, but that is my own affair" (GiD 56). Considering the sheer volume of what he wrote about Satan and his demons, however, one must conclude that Lewis intended his belief to be much more than merely his affair. His best selling book, The Screwtape Letters, features an old devil instructing a younger one in the art of tempting people. Lewis cleverly employs intercepted enemy correspondence to teach people how to resist temptation. His speeches and essays on religion and ethics, collected in three books (Christian Reflections, The Weight of Glory, and God in the Dock), frequently refer to the devil. Mere Christianity, which systematically treats the basics of the faith, and The Problem of Pain, Lewis's highly regarded theodicy, also mention Satan. And scholars consider his refutation of popular and critical misunderstandings of Milton's Satan (in A Preface to Paradise Lost) a bench mark in Milton criticism. His fiction, finally, almost always includes someone playing the devil's role.

With Weston, the character in Satan's role in the space trilogy, Lewis launches a two-pronged campaign. The first, which this chapter discusses, uses Weston to attempt with fiction what Preface to Paradise Lost attempts with literary criticism: an attack on the myth of an heroic Satan. The second, discussed in the following chapter, assaults the myths of Weston's ambitious popular science. An examination of these attacks will show that Milton's influence upon Lewis appears not

only in the latter's myth-making, but also in his theology and his attitude toward science.

Using Weston, Lewis effects upon Satan a change such as T. S. Eliot describes in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (which I quote in my introduction, pages 5-6). Lewis's "new work of art" (the Space Trilogy) modifies Milton's "existing monument" (Paradise Lost). Lewis's Ransom somewhat alters Milton's Christ (and Christian heroes), but his Weston rather obviously changes Milton's Satan, for Lewis uses Weston to combat the myth of an heroic Satan.

Lewis's frequent and vehement critiques of Milton's Satan indicate that he believed Milton's error a serious one. Margaret Hannay goes so far as to say that "Lewis wrote most of his adult fiction to counteract the pernicious image of Milton's Satan" (74). I doubt that his desire to correct Milton's error consciously motivated him to write each book, but he certainly wasted no opportunities to correct readers and critics whom he thought Milton may have led astray. Lewis worked on three books in 1942 (Screwtape Letters, Preface to Paradise Lost, and Perelandra), and each overtly refers to Milton's Satan. In Screwtape Letters, he claims that "Milton's devils, by their grandeur and high poetry, have done great harm" (ix). Perelandra's mention implies that Milton made Satan too dramatically tragic (128). His Preface to Paradise Lost understandably dedicates an entire chapter to Milton's Satan (94-103). The chapter discusses whether Satan is a hero, villain, victim, tragic figure, buffoon, or merely evil. Such a discussion was not necessary until after Blake and the Romantics.

Romantic period readers and critics often think this "pernicious

image" very successful, or as Eliot might put it, "the best, most individual part of his work" (4). Shelley speaks for his time when he says,

> Milton's devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to new torments. (quoted in Diekhoff 30)

Shelley demonstrates that the biases of one's own political and philosophical climate can obscure one's literary understanding. If Shelley read more carefully, he would find Satan himself acknowledging that he is <u>not</u> a victim, that he perseveres <u>not</u> "in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent" but in one he knows to be wrong: the violent overthrow of Heaven's rightful, beneficent King.

Satan admits that "Pride and worse Ambition threw me down" (IV.39). He confesses that God's goodness to him "deserv'd no such return / From me, whom He created" (IV.42-3). He also concedes that God,

> . . . with His good
> Upbraided none; nor was His service hard.
> What could be less than to afford Him praise,
> The easiest recompense, and pay Him thanks,
> How due! yet all His good prov'd ill in me,
> And wrought malice; lifted up so high
> I sdein'd subjection . . . (IV.44-50)

Satan does not suffer at the hands of a tyrannical God "inflicting most horrible revenge." He admits, "I could repent and could obtain / By Act of Grace my former state," but he tortures himself in a hell of his own making. His pride refuses to submit to a right relationship with God (IV.71-94). Lewis says,

> The Stock response to Pride, which Milton reckoned on when he delineated his Satan, has been decaying ever since the Romantic Movement began--that is one of the reasons why I am composing these lectures. (PPL 56)

Shelley ignores God's mercy and Satan's evil pride, and chooses to side with the underdog merely because he defies authority. According to Donald Roberts, revolutions taking place around the world during the Romantic period led Shelley and others to "succumb to the belief that defiance of authority per se is noble and essentially just" (3). But this belief stems from faulty logic. Revolutions in Shelley's day were often just causes against unjust regimes; but it does not follow that because Satan revolts against God, God must therefore be unjust and Satan, heroic. Revolutionaries act justly and heroically only if they revolt against an unjust regime; in Milton's scheme of things, this is clearly not the case. Satan revolts, not against a cruel tyrant, but against the benevolent Creator upon Whom he depends for existence. When he wistfully remembers his prelapsarian life, he calls his submission to God a "happy state" (I.141) in "happy Realms of Light" (I.85). Satan has nothing in Heaven to fear, for, as Lewis points out, dependence upon God brings only joy, and striving for independence, only misery:

> Paradise Lost records . . . the great change in every indi-

> vidual soul from happy dependence to miserable self-assertion and thence either, as in Satan, to final isolation, or, as in Adam, to reconcilement and a different happiness. The truth and passion of [Milton's] presentation are unassailable. They were never, in essence, assailed until rebellion and pride came, in the romantic age, to be admired for their own sake. On this side the adverse criticism of Milton is not so much a literary phenomenon as the shadow cast upon literature by revolutionary politics, antinomian ethics, and the worship of Man by Man. After Blake, Milton criticism is lost in misunderstanding . . . (PPL 133)

Lewis blames the misunderstanding less on Milton than on the Romantic critics. Milton intends Satan's early attractiveness to contrast with his later hideousness. This would not have led astray the Pre-Romantic readers still disinclined to glorify rebellion, for Satan's attractiveness is brief, and his degradation, swift and complete.

From beautiful archangel whose "transcendent brightness didst outshine / Myriads though bright" (I.86-7), Satan falls injured, ugly, and miserable (I.50-91). Using lies and distortion, he gathers round himself in Pandaemonium other fallen angels and lectures them on his heroism (I.300ff.). Then, pretending a heroic mission, he sets out to find a way of gaining personal revenge upon God (II.630ff.). He decides to spy upon and sabotage his enemy's creations--Earth and Man--but his spying soon becomes only lewd peering in upon Adam and Eve's intimate moments. Before long, Gabriel finds Satan lurking and squatting like a toad at Eve's bedside, hoping to taint her dreams (IV.799-809). Later,

having tempted Eden's residents, he returns to Pandaemonium and becomes forever cursed to remain a doomed serpent (X.511-20). So end the bold attempts of the proud, disobedient rebel.

In Preface to Paradise Lost Lewis summarizes one of Satan's punishments, his "progressive degradation":

> From hero to general, from general to politician, from politician to secret service agent, and thence to a thing that peers in at bedroom or bathroom windows, and thence to a toad, and finally to a snake . . . (PPL 99)

In Screwtape Letters, written at the same time as Preface to Paradise Lost, a demon discovers himself changing into a centipede. The demon then mentions that, in Milton, such "changes of shape are a punishment imposed on us by the Enemy [God]" (103). Lewis directly transports ideas from his Milton criticism to his fiction.

The physical degradation of Milton's Satan parallels his spiritual or psychological degradation. As his appearance changes from glorious archangel to groveling snake, he becomes more self-centered and less interesting. Lewis notes how boring is Satan's "monomaniac[al] concern with himself and his supposed rights and wrongs" (PPL 102). He points out how others in Paradise Lost show interest in, and talk about, a wide variety of subjects, but Satan brings up only subjects which he can use to turn attention to himself. To Satan, a person, object, or event matters only insofar as it reflects upon himself (PPL 101-2). He refuses to serve, submit, or repent--that would mean that Someone has a greater claim upon him than himself. "Obdurate pride" (I.68) keeps him from bowing to God, but after boasting that he would rather "reign in Hell,

than serve in Heav'n" (I.263), he admits that "myself am Hell" (IV.75). He reigns only over his own inner Hell, and soon, not even over that:

> He has chosen to have no choice. He has wished to "be himself," and to be in himself and for himself, and his wish has been granted. The Hell he carries with him is, in one sense, a Hell of infinite boredom. Satan . . . is interesting to read about; but Milton makes plain the blank uninterestingness of <u>being</u> Satan. (PPL 102, original emphasis)

By choosing to resist God, he chooses to enslave himself to self and can hardly be thought heroic for doing so.

Satan's choosing plays as important a role in Lewis's argument as does his self-centeredness. Were Satan struggling against a degradation beyond his control, we might consider him a tragic hero suffering unjust punishment. But he freely chooses to resist God and degrade himself each step of the way.

William Hunter explains that "Satan's revolt against God was freely committed; once in revolt, however, he was no longer free" (7:167). Before falling, he obeyed God--an "easy yoke" (II.256). And sometimes, yearning for his prelapsarian heavenly joys, he wonders aloud why he has fallen and acknowledges that he has no one else to blame:

> Hadst thou the same free Will and Power to stand?
> Thou hadst: whom hast thou then or what to accuse,
> But Heav'n's free Love dealt equally to all? (IV.66-8)

Uncompelled, he freely chooses to fall. According to Milton, this free will resides in every creature--human and heavenly alike, for God says,

> . . . ingrate, [Man] had of Mee
> All he could have; I made him just and right,
> Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.
> Such I created all th'Ethereal Powers
> And Spirits, both them who stood and them who fail'd;
> Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell. (III.97-102)

Anticipating accusations of having determined Satan's fall, Milton's God insists that those who fall have only themselves to blame. No one can "justly accuse / Thir maker, or thir making, or thir Fate" because

> . . . they themselves decreed
> Thir own revolt, not I: if I foreknew,
> Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault . . .
> I form'd them free, and free they must remain,
> Till they enthrall themselves. (III.112-3, 116-8, 124-5)

Abdiel, the loyal angel, echoes God's words when he later says to the rebel angel, "Thyself not free, but to thyself enthrall'd" (VI.181). Satan grasps for greater freedoms than God has given him and, enslaving himself, loses his original freedoms.

Milton hammers free will into his readers' minds: the words "free" and "will" appear together ten times in the course of the epic. And for those who miss the poetic expression of his Arminianism, he states it more clearly in his systematic theology, De Doctrina Christiana: "God of His wisdom determined to create men and angels reasonable beings, and therefore free agents" (chap. 3, par. 27). More than any other argument, Milton uses that of free will to "justify the ways of God to men."

In addition to the physical and spiritual degradation, the slavery

to self, and the impending damnation, Satan suffers the humiliation of serving Whom he intends to defeat. He sets himself up for the reversal by challenging God.

> To do aught good never will be our task,
> But ever to do ill our sole delight,
> As being the contrary to His high will
> Whom we resist. If then His Providence
> Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
> Our labor must be to pervert that end,
> And out of good still to find means of evil. (I.159-65)

But angels still loyal to God praise His omnipotence and predict the outcome of Satan's foolish challenge.

> Who seeks
> To lessen Thee, against his purpose serves
> To manifest the more Thy might: his evil
> Thou usest, and from thence creat'st more good. (VII.613-6)

And, after hearing Michael's account of how Christ's sufferings would atone for the sin of all mankind, Adam echoes the angels' praises with some praises of his own.

> O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
> That all this good of evil shall produce,
> And evil turn to good . . . (XII.469-71)

Not only does Satan fail in his attempts to undermine God's good intentions, his efforts also bring "To God more glory, more good will to Men" (XII.477). Against his will, Satan has served his enemy.

Like Milton's Satan, Perelandra's Weston suffers degradation and

humiliation. Because Lewis wants to avoid the heroic Satan myth, Weston inherits only the most hideous--not the attractive--attributes of Milton's Satan:

> . . . those things which disappointed Lewis in Paradise Lost have been altered in Lewis's own Edenic myth, Perelandra; those elements which he most approved in Milton he has sought to emulate . . . Because Lewis objects to the grandeur of Milton's Satan, his own Satan figure is made wholly contemptible. (Hannay 73)

The villain of Paradise Lost may begin so beautifully that some mistake him for the hero, but few, if any, mistake Weston for a hero. When Ransom first meets him in Out of the Silent Planet, he asks "who the devil" Ransom is and what he is doing (12). One can hardly call him eloquent, handsome, or polite (assets normally attributed to heroes--and often to villains); and before the end of the book, Ransom calls him a "buffoon" (129). The captor so misunderstands the Malacandrians that Ransom, the captive, must interpret for him and save his life. Weston leaves the planet like a scared pup with his tail between his legs. Milton's Satan leaves Earth as a snake, but at least he has accomplished what he went to do.

On the next planet, Weston makes an even worse impression. Immediately upon his arrival on Perelandra, Ransom remarks on his "massive egoism," and "authoritative vulgarity" (86). Weston has inherited his boastful self-preoccupation from Satan: Lewis calls both Satan and Weston monomaniacs (PPL 102, PER 90). Like Satan, Weston talks only of himself: though he pretends to discuss other matters, he uses first

person pronouns thirty-seven times in the course of four paragraphs (89-90).

Weston's degradation from importance and grandeur echo Satan's. When Weston first arrives on the planet, he may truthfully call himself "the greatest scientist the world has yet produced" (93), for only he has discovered the secret of space travel. But the next page shows him, like a toad, croaking and "squatting at the roots of his tree with his knees drawn up." Milton's Gabriel finds Satan squatting "like a Toad, close at the ear of Eve" (IV.800), and Weston also assumes a "squatting position . . . close to the Lady's head" (122). The similarity is so striking that one critic even says that Lewis "lifts" the scene directly out of Paradise Lost (Howard 109). Weston's descent is so complete, and so obvious to Ransom, that Ransom begins to think of Weston as "inorganic" or "it" or "the thing" (110-1). He becomes so "definitely non-human," so clearly animal, that Ransom calls him the "Un-man" (122).

Weston differs from Milton's Satan in another important way. Satan is God's most powerful, evil opponent, and a descent into evil therefore is a descent into himself. Weston, on the other hand, wields no power of his own, and therefore descends into someone else: the demonic power ("the Force") to whom he has surrendered control of himself. Before he has been on Perelandra for long, the demon begins to take over, and Weston loses control. He is "not a man . . . Weston himself was gone" (110). "A confusion of persons in damnation," Lewis calls it; servants of Satan "melt down into their Master," and Weston becomes "one whom Satan has digested" (173). The devil uses, consumes, even masticates Weston. And Weston's body serves only as a tool, a "bridge by which

something else had invaded Perelandra" (110-1). To be so used further humiliates him.

This, too, is Hell. The demon may supernaturally enable the Un-man to speak Old Solar (86, 94), or forego sleep for many days (128), but such tricks do not give him joy. After he voluntarily surrenders himself to "the Force," writhing miserably, he babbles,

> I'm down in the bottom of a big black hole . . . I can't think very well now, but that doesn't matter, he does all my thinking for me . . . That boy keeps shutting the windows. That's all right, they've taken off my head and put someone else's on me. (129, original ellipses)

Understood as the result of demon possession in the biblical sense, Weston's babbling makes more sense. When Weston (now reduced by demons to the "Un-man) speaks of "he," "that boy," "they," and "someone else," he is speaking of demons who have gradually taken control of the parts of his consciousness that he has offered to "the Force." When he tries to think clearly, to see things through his own--not the demon's--eyes, "that boy" closes the windows. He surrenders control of himself, and those to whom he surrenders guard that control vigilantly.

> My God, Ransom, it's awful. You don't understand. Right down under layers and layers. Buried alive. You try to connect things and can't. They take your head off . . . (170)

Weston's Hell comes of losing control of himself to diabolic powers. Other scientists, such as Frost and Wither in <u>That Hideous Strength</u>, also surrender their wills to diabolism. Their enslavement "occur[s] when the mind . . . has placed itself, by some <u>voluntary choice</u> of its

own, however vague, under the control of some hostile organism" (239, my emphasis). Lewis describes the demise of Wither, who so submerges himself in evil that his emotions no longer function as they should:

> The last scene of Dr. Faustus where the man raves and implores on the edge of Hell is, perhaps, stage fire. The last moments before damnation are not often so dramatic. Often the man knows with perfect clarity that some still possible action of his own will could yet save him. But he cannot make this knowledge real to himself . . . some fatal lethargy seems to him at that moment more important than the choice between total joy and total destruction. With eyes wide open, seeing that the endless terror is just about to begin and yet unable to feel terrified, he watches passively. (THS 353, my emphasis)

Weston's sinking into something or someone else differs from Satan's "Myself am Hell." Satan wants self, and wallowing in self means (for him alone) being mired in the worst thing in the universe; for Weston, on the other hand, sinking into evil means sinking into something (Hell) or someone else (Satan or his demons). Milton's Satan is a leader with certain powers and superlatives, but Weston is definitely a follower (and therefore less interesting to a Romantic).

Until, like Satan, Weston gives himself to evil, he has as much freedom as anyone. But evil, like a whirlpool, pulls him down. He says that "it's a question of surrendering yourself to that [Force]—making yourself the conductor of the live, fiery, central purpose . . ." (PER 95). He surrenders himself, saying, "I dedicate my own life" (92), and

"I call that Force into me completely" (96). No wonder a demon possesses him and drags him quickly into "the bottom of a big black hole" (129). He does not fall hopelessly, however, for Ransom gives him a reprieve--an opportunity to cast off the evil Force (165-71). But, "it is meaningless to talk of forcing a man to do freely what a man has freely made impossible for himself" (PR 181). People who leap from skyscrapers choose to relinquish control of their destiny and become, for the rest of their (brief) lives, slaves to certain laws of physics. As Lewis says at the conclusion of The Great Divorce, "Any man may choose eternal death. Those who choose it will have it" (124). Like Milton's Satan, Weston freely chooses to resist goodness, give himself to evil, and damns himself to Hell.

Lewis's Arminianism, though not as relentlessly ever-present as that of Milton, appears often enough to be one of his major emphases. And, as we have just seen, it figures prominently in his description of Hell, for Lewis insists that people choose to go there. Popular misrepresentations of Christianity imply that God weighs people's good actions against their bad, thereby deciding whether they go "up" or "down." But careful examination of the New Testament (e.g. Romans 3:22-4 and 6:23, and Ephesians 2:8-9) puts to rest the error of "earning." Lewis agrees: Hell is merely the natural consequence of the direction people freely choose for themselves. God does not damn people--they damn themselves with every moral choice they make. A memorable statement of the idea appears in The Great Divorce: "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in Hell, choose it"

(72, original emphasis). He writes his most lucid statement of the belief in his most obviously theological book, Mere Christianity:

> . . . every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before . . . you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature . . . To be the one kind of creature is heaven: that is, it is joy and peace and knowledge and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state or the other. (MC 86-7)

Illustrating in fiction a point Lewis makes in his theology, Weston chooses to go to Hell.

Finally, it remains for Lewis to add impotence to idiocy by making the Un-man's efforts, like Satan's, work to the glory of Maleldil. When in the first book Weston kidnaps Ransom, he (Weston) does "something which [he] never intended: namely [he] gave a human being a chance to learn that language" (PER 24-5). Had Ransom not learned Old Solar, he would not have qualified to defend Perelandra. And, contrary to Weston's ambitions, he becomes, by trying to tempt the Lady, a tool in the hands of Maleldil. The King remarks to the Lady,

> We have learned of evil, though not as the Evil One wished us to learn. We have learned better than that, and know it more, for it is waking that understands sleep and not sleep that understands waking . . . Maleldil has brought us out of the one ignorance, and we have not entered the other. It was by

> the Evil One himself that he brought us out of the first. Little did that dark mind know the errand on which he really came to Perelandra! (209)

Weston, completely against his wishes, serves his enemy, thereby completing his humiliation.

Although writing fiction, Lewis goes so far as to hint at his avoidance of Milton's error. Disgusted by what the Un-man has become, Ransom believes that "a sombre tragic Satan out of Paradise Lost, would have been a welcome release from the thing he was actually doomed to watch" (128). Readers despise Lewis's villain, so that, with fiction as well as with criticism, he succeeds in his "demolition of the absurd notion that Satan is the hero of Paradise Lost" (Roberts 3).

7. The Villain: Weston and the Myths of Popular Science

While altering the "existing monument" of Milton's Satan by introducing his own, Lewis also uses Weston for another purpose: to warn his readers against the ambitious abuse of scientific knowledge. In this purpose, Lewis follows a precedent set by Milton. Shortly after the 1660 Restoration (and Milton's imprisonment for writing against it) the Royal Society appeared under Charles II. Sir Isaac Newton led an impressive group of thinkers trying to understand the consequences of (and build theories upon) recent scientific discoveries by Galileo, Copernicus, and Newton himself. Although composed of devout Christians, the Society pursued a secular understanding of Nature.

Within the decade, Milton responded to the rise of secular scientific speculation. In Books VII and VIII of Paradise Lost, Raphael warns Adam against the abuse of knowledge--especially that of astronomy and origins. Lewis, too, will focus on these two sciences, but perhaps Milton emphasizes these because, firstly, they receive significant attention from the Royal Society, and secondly, they appear to challenge mankind's unique position in Creation. When Adam asks Raphael "how this World / Of Heav'n and Earth conspicuous first began" (VII.62-3), the archangel agrees to answer his "desire / Of knowledge within bounds" (VII.119-20). Although he promises, "what thou canst attain . . . shall not be withheld" (VII.115-7), he points out Adam's limitations. Some knowledge surpasses our abilities--"To none communicable in Earth or Heaven"--and we should be content to leave it as such: we should not invent theories about things beyond our knowledge (120-4). We should therefore be satisfied and practice temperance with what God has

enabled us to learn:

> . . . Knowledge is as food, and needs no less
> Her Temperance over Appetite, to know
> In measure what the mind may well contain,
> Oppresses else with Surfeit, and soon turns
> Wisdom to Folly, as Nourishment to Wind. (VII.125-30)

If people ingest too much knowledge, it produces foolishness, or "hot air," just as consuming too much food produces hot air of another sort. God allows Adam to learn about the universe as long as his desire for knowledge is motivated either by an innocent curiosity (VII.61) or by a real desire to more knowledgeably glorify his Creator (VII.96-7). In Book VII, Raphael teaches Adam primarily about temperance in curiosity. In Book VIII, the archangel goes on to tell Adam that he should be content with whatever God reveals to him.

What Adam learns about the Creation in Book VII largely slakes his thirst for knowledge (VIII.7-8), but "something yet of doubt remains" (VIII.13). Adam wants Raphael to answer him "whether Heav'n move or Earth" (VIII.70)--whether the geocentric, Ptolemaic model or the Copernican model of the Solar System is correct. But Adam asks too much. Raphael replies,

> From Man or Angel the great Architect
> Did wisely to conceal, and not divulge
> His secrets to be scann'd by them who ought
> Rather admire . . . (VIII.72-5)

He implies that some persons, if they knew more, rather than using their increased knowledge for increased worship, would grow proud of them-

selves. And other people, not satisfied with common knowledge would venture "quaint Opinions" and conjectures, making God laugh at their foolishness (VIII.75-9). To avoid such pride and embarrassing fatuity, Raphael instructs Adam to

> Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid,
> Leave them to God above, Him serve and fear;
> . . . joy thou
> In what He gives to thee, this Paradise
> And thy fair Eve: Heav'n is for thee too high
> To know what passes there; be lowly wise . . .
> Contented [w]hat thus far hath been reveal'd
> Not of Earth only but of highest Heav'n. (VIII.166-78)

So Raphael encourages Adam (and Milton, his readers) to be satisfied with what scientific knowledge God has given him lest he fall into foolishness or pride.

Lewis also warns against such foolishness and pride. Weston embodies intemperate, dissatisfied desire for, and abuse of, scientific knowledge.

> Dissatisfaction, sailing under false colors of liberation and ambition and progress, is the flagship in Weston's flotilla . . . In the world of Malacandra and Perelandra (and Narnia), it appears that acceptance of the given, and submission to it, is the key to contentment. Paradoxically, of course, contrary to the accusations of all Nietzschean and Promethean romantics like . . . Weston that this is all an opiate, this submission is synonymous with freedom and

maturity. (Howard 94-5)

Lewis uses Weston to warn readers away from this dissatisfaction by making him a "buffoon-villain image of the 'metabiological' heresy" (OS 72). This heresy against science--not religion--incorporates two pseudo-scientific myths. The first is scientistic, progressive macro-evolution, variously called emergent evolution, popular evolutionism, pseudo-Darwinism, and developmentalism. The second myth, space colonization, holds that science will eventually enable us to travel to and inhabit other planets in the universe. The first myth flows naturally into (or culminates in) the second, and Lewis attacks them both in his portrayal of Weston.

Critics have occasionally--and wrongly--accused Lewis of writing anti-science fiction, and such an accusation from J. B. S. Haldane resulted in a devastating rebuttal (OS 69-79). Lewis therein reminds Haldane of his (Lewis's) statement that "the physical sciences [are] good and innocent in themselves" (THS 203). Mary Midgley, author of Evolution as a Religion, when questioned about Lewis's influences upon her book, writes that "a scientistic revuewer [sic] lately wrote sourly that my frequent references to CSL show that there is no need to take my writings seriously." But neither Midgley nor Lewis attacks science itself, though they do assail those who purvey misinformed, popular, pseudo-science as the genuine article.

Lewis read and knew Darwinian theories of natural selection. He accepts the verity of what Darwin observed, recorded, and theorized, and is "not in the least denying that organisms on this planet may have 'evolved'" (XR 91). He realizes that he is not a scientist (OS 70-1)

and makes it very clear that he does not dispute Darwin's theories.

> I do not mean that the doctrine of Evolution as held by practising biologists is a Myth. It may be shown, by later biologists, to be a less satisfactory hypothesis than was hoped fifty years ago. But that does not amount to being a Myth. It is a genuine scientific hypothesis. (XR 83)

The real science of Darwinian evolutionary theory seems good to him because "it covers more of the facts than any other hypothesis at present on the market" (XR 85). But he carefully defines the theory with which he agrees.

> . . . for the scientist Evolution is a purely biological theorem. It takes over organic life on this planet as a going concern and tries to explain certain changes within that field. It makes no cosmic statements, no metaphysical statements, no eschatological statements. Granted that we now have minds we can trust, granted that organic life came to exist, it tries to explain, say, how a species that once had wings came to lose them. It explains this by the negative effect of environment operating on small variations. It does not itself explain the origin of organic life, nor of the variations, nor does it discuss the origin and validity of reason. (XR 86)

Lewis wants readers to be sure that he knows the difference between pop science and careful, skeptical science.

In Perelandra, Weston personifies popular science. When he arrives on the planet, he engages Ransom in conversations that reveal his belief

in developmentalism (89-96). He shows real scientific genius in physics by inventing space travel, but, upon his return from Malacandra, leaves physics to "plunge into Biology, and particularly into what may be called biological philosophy," quickly becoming "a convinced believer in emergent evolution" (PER 90).

Weston does not give Ransom a systematic explanation of emergent evolution, but its basic elements gradually appear as he rambles on about himself and his discoveries. His beliefs--and the words Lewis uses to describe them--are a mixture of 1820's Auguste Comte (adulation of natural science and the Religion of Humanity), 1830's Friedrich Nietzsche (Übermensch, or "Superman"), and 1910's George Bernard Shaw ("Life Force" evolutionary theology). Smatterings of Henri Bergson, Jean Baptiste Lamarck, William James, C. L. Morgan, Arthur Schopenhauer, the Huxleys, and others, show that Lewis read widely in emergent evolution before creating Weston. A very simple summary of the major tenets of emergent (or progressive macro-) evolution would include: 1) life evolved from an inorganic mixture of chemicals; 2) living organisms are evolving upward toward perfection; 3) mankind is the highest manifestation of this evolution; 4) future evolution will enable mankind to progress toward perfection, that is, God. Most of the fore-mentioned men would agree to most of these statements. Some would add that this progress or emergence is empowered by a Force or Spirit, which is gradually perfecting itself and becoming God. Bad science--not any particularly anti-Christian philosophy--draws Lewis's criticism.

Weston believes in no "sharp line between the organic and the inorganic . . . no break, no discontinuity, in the unfolding of the cosmic

process" (90). Organic life had simply emerged, either from nothing or from some aimless mixing of inorganic chemical soup. Its struggle to evolve had begun. Once alive, or perhaps even before, it had been motivated by an "unconsciously purposive dynamism," a "blind, inarticulate purposiveness," and began "thrusting its way upward and ever upward in an endless unity of differentiated achievements towards an ever-increasing complexity of organisation" (90-1). Somewhere on its upward path, Life acquires personality, will, and spiritual power. This "self-thinking, self-originating" Life-Force inhabits ever-increasingly complex organisms until "to-day in [its] highest form--civilized man," it has become "a Force that can choose its instruments" (PER 92, OSP 136). Weston believes he is its instrument on Perelandra, that he is "chosen. Guided. I've become conscious that I'm a man set apart" (93). But he, and all mankind, are merely vehicles. "Man in himself is nothing. The forward movement of Life--the growing spirituality--is everything" (91). This "whole cosmic process is moving" ever onward and upward to its goal: to become pure Spirit. To this goal Weston offers the remainder of his (short) life. "It is through me that Spirit itself is at this moment pushing on to its goal" (93). And Weston cares not whether the spirit possessing him comes from God or the Devil or both:

> "Your Devil and your God," said Weston, "are both pictures of the same Force . . . The next stage of emergent evolution, beckoning us forward, is God; the transcended stage behind, ejecting us, is the Devil. Your own religion, after all, says that the devils are fallen angels."
>
> "And you are saying precisely the opposite, as far as

> I can make out--that angels are devils who've risen in the world."
>
> "It comes to the same thing," said Weston. (94, original emphasis)

Heavenly or diabolical, he surrenders himself to it, making himself "the conductor of the live, fiery, central purpose--becoming the very finger with which it reaches forward" (95).

Far from believing that such a force does not exist, Lewis believes that, by surrendering oneself to some unidentifiable Power, one opens oneself up for demon possession. If one opens oneself to control without specifically inviting (the Christian) God, His opponents eagerly seize the opportunity. When Weston calls the Force into himself, demons apparently torment him and epileptic-like convulsions twist and disfigure him (PER 96, cf. Mark 9:18). When, in Paradise Lost, Satan falls by aspiring to become God, one of his punishments is disfigurement on the Assyrian mount (IV.126-7). And when Weston surrenders himself to the devil-trying-to-become-God, he, too, is disfigured. But when Maleldil's obedient servant, Ransom, returns to Earth in Perelandra, his friends find that he has been transfigured on the Fixed Mount (30), much as Christ was transfigured on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 17:1-8). God, or Maleldil, humiliates the proud and exalts the humble.

Many of Lewis's essays clearly argue against the Life-Force myth. "The Evolutionary Hymn," his most blatantly sarcastic criticism of the myth, calls it "future's endless stair" (POEM 55). Midgley uses a similar metaphor, calling it "the irresistible escalator . . . the creation myth of our age" (30). Lewis and Midgley, and a few other

scientists and philosophers, criticize not careful scientists such as Darwin, but those blindly optimistic pop scientists, who often assign motivations to explain what physical scientists describe only as processes.

Science essayist Gregg Easterbrook makes the same point: "Darwinian theory tells little about how life is created, since its logical precepts concern organisms that are already alive" (33). But he contradicts himself embarrassingly when, on the following page, he asserts that "a fundamental doctrine of natural selection is that all life on Earth has a single ancestor: a single molecule or string of chemicals that made the jump from inert to animate." Darwin's theories of natural selection do not argue for such a "jump," which is a Neo-Darwinian perversion. Lewis sees in that perversion the false basis for the whole Life Force Myth.

Weston believes in a continuity between the inorganic and organic, but the gap between an inorganic chemical soup and a single-celled organism or a DNA molecule looms so large that scientists have trouble understanding it, much less bridging it. According to Lewis, the Myth believes that Life must appear from

> . . . matter endlessly, aimlessly moving to bring forth it knows not what. Then by some millionth, millionth chance--what tragic irony!--the conditions at one point of space and time bubble up into that tiny fermentation which we call organic life. (XR 87).

And Lewis's "millionth, millionth" is no exaggeration. Francis Crick (Nobel Prize winning pioneer of DNA research), for example, says that

"DNA is just too complicated to have evolved unassisted in a mere 3.8 billion years [the approximate age of Earth]" (Easterbrook 34). Countless scientists argue that the second law of thermodynamics rules out the possibility of life from non-life. The law (also called the law of entropy) states that energy tends to dissipate, order tends toward disorder, and things do not grow more complex. Lewis calls the law "the inevitable downward trend in the universe as a whole" (GiD 44). "Self-originating activity" (PER 92) seems to Lewis patently absurd, and he has in agreement with him a host of the best scientists.

Lewis agrees with what he considers the real science of Darwin. When he states that evolution "tries to explain certain changes within that field" (XR 86), he expresses his belief in Darwin's theories of microevolution, not Neo-Darwinian macroevolution. Another scientist describes the important differences:

> Microevolution involves observable changes within lower levels of classification which give rise to variations. A moth may develop the ability to blend in against a black background, but it is still a moth. Macroevolution is the general theory that all life arose from nonlife in some prebiotic soup (where chemical reactions plus some form of energy gave rise to the first life), and all life evolved from the first life up to Homo sapiens. (Moreland 220)

Darwin calls his theory "natural selection" or "descent with modification," not "evolution." He resists any leap to unjustified conclusions, insisting that "no innate tendency to progressive development exists" (338). Note that Darwin titles his second most famous book The Descent

of Man, rather than The Ascent of Man. Mary Midgley says he "utterly distrusted the idea [of progress], which seemed to him baseless," and avoided using the word "evolution" (34).

Lewis appeals to the writings of J. B. S. Haldane to combat the doctrine of emergent or progressive evolution,

> In the science, Evolution is a theory about changes: in the Myth it is a fact about improvements. Thus a real scientist like Professor J. B. S. Haldane is at pains to point out that popular ideas of Evolution lay a wholly unjustified emphasis on those changes which have rendered creatures (by human standards) 'better' or more interesting. He adds: 'We are therefore inclined to regard progress as the rule in evolution. Actually it is the exception, and for every case of it there are ten of degeneration.' (XR 85, original emphasis).

In spite of what real scientists believe, pseudo-scientists such as Herbert Spencer, Thomas Huxley, and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck have successfully given our civilization its most treasured myth. Although a few scientists of integrity have occasionally challenged what Midgley calls the "Escalator Fallacy" (6), she points out that, ever since 1860,

> . . . Spencer's bold, colourful and flattering picture of evolution has constantly prevailed over the more sober, difficult one of Darwin, not only in the public mind, but also surprisingly often in the minds of scientists who had reason to know its limitations. (35)

So the Myth, with a smattering of Darwin's real science thrown in, is

preached by pop scientists in schools, in magazines, and on television. With rare exceptions (such as Lewis and Midgley), those few resisting the Myth are either fundamentalist Christians or top-calibre scientists such as Albert Einstein, Robert Jastrow, Stanley Jaki, Chandra Wickramasinghe, and Sir Fred Holyle (Varghese 1-78).

Lewis's most effective attacks on popular evolution and space colonization appear in "The Funeral of a Great Myth." He compares them to a moving epic drama, with Life "moving from the status of 'almost zero' to the status of 'almost infinity'" (XR 86). It merits quoting at length:

> At first everything seems to be against the infant hero of our drama . . . against all by insuperable obstacles, it spreads, it breeds, it complicates itself; from the amoeba up to the reptile, up to the mammal . . . This is the age of monsters: dragons prowl the earth, devour one another, and die. Then the old irresistible theme of the . . . Ugly Duckling is repeated . . . there comes forth a little, naked, shivering, cowering biped, shuffling, not yet fully erect, promising nothing: the product of another millionth, millionth chance. His name in this Myth is Man . . . He becomes the Cave Man with his flints and his club . . . almost a brute yet somehow able to invent art, pottery, language, weapons, cookery and nearly everything else (his name in another story is Robinson Crusoe), dragging his screaming mate by her hair (I do not exactly know why) . . . and cowering before the terrible gods whom he has invented in his own image.

> Science arises and dissipates the superstitions of his infancy. More and more he becomes the controller of his own fate . . . we follow our hero into the future . . . a race of demi-gods now rule the planet (in some versions, the galaxy). Eugenics have made certain that only demi-gods will now be born . . . Man has ascended his throne. Man has become God. (XR 87-8)

But this is not the end. The "more debased versions of the Myth" end at this point, but the best versions continue until Nature kills Life's proudest representative in a return to chaos. The universe burns out and "all ends in nothingness" (XR 88). Anthropomorphized Life dies a tragic hero's death.

Lewis says he "grew up believing in this Myth," enjoying its "almost perfect grandeur" more than any Greek or Norse myth, and often "wish[ing] that it was not mythical, but true" (XR 88). But what he learns about logic begins to undermine his beliefs and wishes. The Myth's flaw is not a lack of evidence for one or another step on the "escalator," but a fatal self-contradiction permeating the whole story:

> . . . the Myth asks me to believe that reason is simply the unforeseen and unintended by-product of a mindless process at one stage of its endless and aimless becoming. The content of the Myth thus knocks from under me the only ground on which I could possibly believe the Myth to be true. If my own mind is the product of the irrational . . . how shall I trust my mind when it tells me about Evolution? (XR 89)

Elsewhere, he rephrases the problem: "I see no reason for believing

that one accident should be able to give me a correct account of all other accidents" (GiD 53).

Lewis uses real science, real logic, and some satire to attack the popular progressive evolution in which Weston believes. Against his space colonization or planetary hegemony, however, Lewis builds analogies and arguments based upon emotions such as fear and disgust. We hear echoes of Nietzsche, Hitler, and Stalin in Weston's explanation of anthropocentric space colonization to the Malacandrians:

> . . . I bear on my shoulders the destiny of the human race. Your tribal life with its stone-age weapons and bee-hive huts, its primitive coracles and elementary social structure, has nothing to compare with our civilization--with our science, medicine and law, our armies, our architecture, our commerce, and our transport system which is rapidly annihilating space and time. Our right to supersede you is the right of the higher over the lower. (OSP 135)

Weston believes that what he represents "is greater than any system of morality" and justifies whatever the race must do to survive (OSP 136). His speech to Ransom in Perelandra sounds either like something Hitler's propagandists might say about the Aryan "Master Race" or Nietzsche's writings about "men and supermen":

> The world leaps forward through great men and greatness always transcends mere moralism. When the leap has been made our "diabolism" as you would call it becomes the morality of the next stage; but while we are making it, we are called criminals, heretics, blasphemers . . . (95)

Ransom has heard Weston claiming to be "justified in doing anything--absolutely anything" (OSP 27) to take Malacandra. He knows Weston's ethic and warns the Malacandrians that Weston "would destroy all your people to make room for our people; then he would do the same with other worlds again . . . they will leap from world to world . . ." (OSP 123). Ransom is right, for Weston says he intends "to march on, step by step, superseding, where necessary, the lower forms of life that we find, claiming planet after planet . . ." (OSP 137). He speaks not just of hegemony, colonization, or imperialism--he describes the consumption of "disposable worlds." Our species would suck a planet dry before junking it like a beer can.

Lewis realizes that real people hope for such futures, and this realization--and a wager with J. R. R. Tolkien (OS xvii)--inspired Lewis to begin the trilogy. Weston is not just a diabolical, mad scientist in a horror story; he is intended to represent what this Myth produces.

> . . . the danger of 'Westonism' I meant to be real. What set me about writing the book was the discovery that a pupil of mine took all that dream of interplanetary colonization quite seriously, and the realization that thousands of people in one way and another depend on some hope of perpetuating and improving the human race for the whole meaning of the universe--that a 'scientific' hope of defeating death is a real rival to Christianity . . . (LET 166-7)

As I write this, NASA's Magellan probe speeds toward very detailed explorations of Perelandra--that is, Venus.

The prospect of space travel did not please Lewis. Six years

before we sent men to the moon, he warned that doing so would deprive us of a most powerful, beautiful myth. He did not think we would never again enjoy the moon--only that it would be less mysterious.

> No moonlit night will ever be the same to me again if, as I look up at that pale disc, I must think 'Yes: up there to the left is the Russian area, and over there to the right is the American bit.' . . . The immemorial Moon--the Moon of the myths, the poets, the lovers--will have been taken from us forever. (XR 173)

And that someone goes to the moon does not bother him (he sent men to Mars and Venus) nearly so much as the idea that people take with them their fallenness. The year after Russia sent the first man-made object into space, he hoped we would never "travel in space and distribute upon new worlds the vomit of our corruption" (RP 103). To Lewis, the eldil-inhabited heavens were altogether lovely, innocent, unspoiled. Human intruders such as Weston only ruin it.

> We know what our race does to strangers. Man destroys or enslaves every species he can. Civilized man murders, enslaves, cheats, and corrupts savage man . . . Our ambassador to new worlds will be the needy and greedy adventurer or the ruthless technical expert. They will do as their kind has always done. What that will be if they meet things weaker than themselves, the black man and the red man can tell. (WLN 89)

As if images of vomit or rapine are not strong enough, Lewis compares space travel in Perelandra to rape. In hopes of avoiding death, our

"seed," the "life which is contained in the loins of our own species," is "forced" upon the galaxies (81-2). This vain, seductive hope, like a pornographic fantasy, is "fondled in secret by thousands of ignorant men" (82). Even more graphically, Lewis employs the same metaphors of rape and venereal disease in a posthumously published poem:

> So Man, grown vigorous now,
> Holds himself ripe to breed,
> Daily devises how
> To ejaculate his seed
> And boldly fertilize
> The black womb of the unconsenting skies. (POEM 56)

In Out of the Silent Planet, he calls space the "womb of the worlds" (32), and this poem, with its phallic rocket, "the large, / Steel member grow[n] erect" (POEM 56), suggests Earth raping its own mother. Hardly a more vividly grotesque--or effective--metaphor exists in the whole of Lewis's writings. Continuing, he asks,

> Shall we, when the grim shape
> Roars upward, dance and sing?
> Yes: if we honour rape,
> If we take pride to fling
> So bountifully on space
> The sperm of our long woes, our large disgrace. (POEM 57)

What the aerospace industry proudly regards as great achievements for mankind, Lewis regards as hideous crimes against untouched realms of the maternal heavens. Technology has enabled mankind to violate virginal space by breaking through its atmospheric hymen and polluting its womb.

No wonder Maleldil supernaturally transports Ransom to (or into) Venus, rather than sending him in a rocket! Ransom's arrival there resembles a supernatural virgin birth, and Weston's space-age penetration of Venus's atmosphere, a diseased rape.

Such talk of heavenly barriers and earth's sicknesses occurs frequently in Lewis's works. And Lewis thought this pollution more than merely ecological and political. He shared Milton's biblical belief in a real fall: a physical, moral, and spiritual disintegration of planet Earth. To keep us from infecting other planets with sin, syphilis, and wars, "the vast astronomical distances [are] God's quarantine precautions" (WLN 91). In Perelandra, Lewis repeats this idea almost verbatim when he describes Weston's scientism:

> He was a man possessed with the idea . . . that humanity, having now sufficiently corrupted the planet where it arose, must at all costs contrive to seed itself over a larger area: that the vast astronomical distances which are God's quarantine regulations, must somehow be overcome. (81)

Current technology, with which Pioneer 10 travels twenty-five miles per second, would still require 33,000 years to reach the nearest star (Easterbrook 34), so "God's quarantine" yet confines us to our Solar System. In Paradise Lost, too, God employs distances as barriers. He separates Hell from Earth by "The dark unbottom'd infinite Abyss / . . . the vast abrupt" (II.405-9), and He places Heaven far beyond the reach of our telescopes:

> God to remove His ways from human sense,
> Plac'd Heav'n from Earth so far, that earthly sight,

> If it presume, might err in things too high,
> And no advantage gain. (VIII.119-22)

So Milton separates Heaven, Earth, and Hell with "God's quarantine," and when God erects a barrier, Satan, like Weston, wants to penetrate it. Satan flies "vast astronomical distances" before violating the wall with which God protects Eden (IV.180-92). Milton calls Satan a wolf leaping a wall to prey upon defenseless sheep, and a thief stealing cash from an innocent shopkeeper. Little imagination, incidently, is required to compare Weston to a wolf: he howls and bites like one (PER 96, 220).

To create a successful villain, Lewis borrows heavily from Milton, and a few more of their similarities warrant mention. Satan feels a sense of "injur'd merit" (I.98), and Weston complains that his life is "not fair" (130). Satan rules the air (Paradise Regained I.45-6), and Weston invents space flight. Satan distorts the truth with near-truth (V.771), making "his lies as like the truth as he can" (RP 106), and Weston's words, too, are "always very nearly true" (PER 133).

Finally, returning to science and technology, Satan and Weston both rely upon modern weapons of warfare. When Satan's hordes attack Michael's army, they use cannon (VI.484ff.) to fight dirty war in Heaven. Spenser calls cannon "that diuelish yron Engin wrought / In deepest Hell . . . ordaind to kill" (I.vii.13.1-4). Milton agrees that gunpowder is an evil invention and echoes Spenser, calling cannon "devilish Enginry" (VI.553). On Malacandra, Weston kills a hross with a rifle (OSP 81) and threatens the planet with bombing and chemical warfare (123). On Perelandra, he threatens Ransom and the Lady with a revolver (PER 86). Rockets enable him to defy "God's quarantine" and,

with a boat, he can determine his own location (120). On a planet of floating islands, controlling one's own destiny means defying God's will (see my chapter on setting). With weapons, however, he tries to control other people's destinies: to make them do as he pleases, to end their lives, to play God. That is Satan's fatal mistake.

The possibility of that same mistake, perhaps, makes Lewis careful of science. Although "the physical sciences [are] good and innocent in themselves" (THS 203), they give scientists great power to play God. With science, men try to understand great mysteries, work miracles, soar into Heaven, create things, work miracles, take lives, make life, perpetuate life, and so on. The Bible teaches that some knowledge and power belong to God alone (Isaiah 55:9), and Milton concurs with this in Raphael's injunctions to Adam. Lewis teaches that those who imitate Weston and his ilk by trying to usurp Maleldil's (God's) sovereignty will fall as Satan does.

Weston damns himself when he endeavors to dethrone Maleldil. But behind this warning is another, larger, more subtle warning. The myth of popular science must also fall because it "is a real rival to Christianity" (LET 167), God's own Myth. Lewis, as my second chapter indicates, believes that Christ fully accomplishes what all previous myths only vainly hint at, and that "Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call 'real things' . . . the story of Christ is simply a true myth" (LAG 427). He believes that "Pagan stories . . . are mere beginnings--the first faint whisper of the wind from beyond the world--while Christianity is the thing itself" (LAG 430). It fulfills earlier myths and answers the questions they raise. Not only are no other myths

required, but new myths challenge the God's own final, true Myth.

When Weston and others preach our progressive evolution up to the "Omega man"--as William Day calls the supermen or demi-gods of our distant future (290)--and space colonization, they challenge God's perfect Myth. Science will not fall, for, as someone has said, all truth is God's truth. But, as Milton and Lewis write (or imply), those who distort truth to raise themselves and attack God will fall as Satan falls.

8. Conclusion

As this study has shown, the methods and motives of Paradise Lost live on in Perelandra (and in several other books by Lewis). And T. S. Eliot's description of great old works "asserting their immortality" in the writings that follow accurately delineates the relationship between Milton's epic and Lewis's novel (4). In spite of all that the two works share, however, they have nearly three hundred years and the Enlightenment between them.

The Enlightenment--better considered a process than a period of time--has culminated in a Weltanschauung vastly different from that in which Milton wrote. Although it began under Christians such as Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton and John Locke, it eventually led away from traditional Christianity through Deism and secular humanism to progressive evolutionism (or scientism), logical positivism and scientific naturalism. And, by questioning tradition and authority, the Enlightenment ended fourteen centuries of authoritarianism and ushered in the present situation wherein each person is his or her own authority in matters of conduct and belief.

The period ended by the Enlightenment began when the Bible (as interpreted by Church authorities) became the source of religion, morals and mythology--the source, in fact, of Europe's new world view. Dante, Spenser and Milton wrote in a (largely) Christian Weltanschauung, but Lewis wrote after the Christian outlook had given way to the present one. Although Lewis never (to my knowledge) did so, he would divide mythology into three distinct periods. The first, pre-Christian pagan mythology, foreshadows and stimulates sehnsucht for the second. The

second period, (Judeo-) Christian Myth, fulfills all that pre-Christian myths anticipate. And the third period, post-Christian pagan mythology, leads people away from the (true) Christian Myth and therefore into falsehood and away from God.

The Weltanschauung now preeminent in the West is as pagan (irreligious and hedonistic) as that of pre-Christian Greeks and Romans. In The New Paganism, theologian-historian Harold Lindsell details the overthrow of the Christian outlook by post-Christian paganism and tells how this new Weltanschauung has led to a new Zeitgeist--a new moral and cultural climate of relativism and decadence. He describes how this new world view depends upon bad philosophy and even worse science, but, unlike Lewis, he does not mention its myths.

In Lewis's works the mythology of all three periods appear. He uses pre-Christian pagan mythology throughout his works to point toward its fulfillment in Christian mythology. In his science fiction, essays, and poetry, he harnesses pre-Christian and Christian mythology together to combat the presuppositions, propositions and predictions of post-Christian paganism's greatest myth, progressive evolution (and its offspring, space colonization). In the post-Christian Weltanschauung Lewis sees great dangers. Logical positivism or scientific naturalism (if strictly observed) leads people to despise themselves; progressive evolution, on the other hand, leads people to worship themselves and their descendants ("Omega Man") as gods. He enjoys the intrinsic beauty of the progressive evolution myth, regardless of its relationship to science or Christianity. Recall that he "grew up believing in this Myth," relished its "almost perfect grandeur," and often "wished that

it was not mythical, but true" (XR 88). But, in his own writings, he quite obviously prefers to employ myths which lead readers toward rather than away from the True (Christian) Myth.

If myth-makers fall short of the future True Myth for which they strive, they cannot be faulted for their shortcomings. But, once the True Myth has appeared, myth-makers who abandon it to create imitations distract people from the truth and thereby do something inherently less admirable. Once scientists discover a problem's solution, they do not start looking elsewhere for the solution; instead, they look for ways to incorporate that new data into their Weltanschauung and how to harness the data to solve other problems. Now that real science and philosophy no longer expect progressive evolution to explain life, it can be given to myth-makers to use for more stories. It should be treated as Lewis treated it, for (though it is bad science) it is beautiful myth.

In the future, after the new paganism reaches its apogee from Christianity, the next period in the history of mythology may be called "post-pagan" or "Neo-Christian" or something altogether different from everything preceding it. Then, perhaps, the pre-Christian and Christian myths perpetuated in Paradise Lost and Perelandra will again "assert their immortality" in the writings of future myth-makers. Let us hope they succeed to the degree that Milton and Lewis have.

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